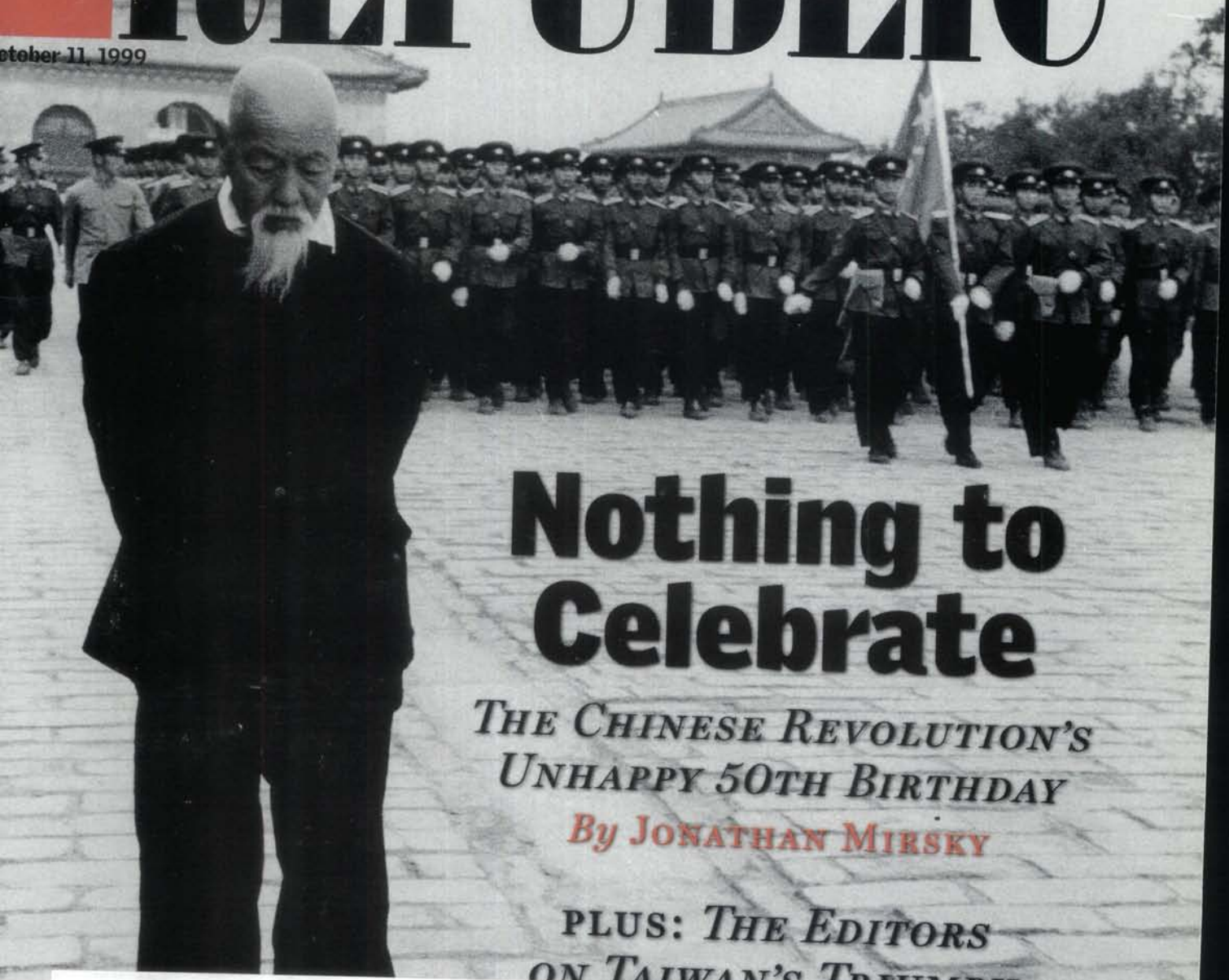
FALL BOOKS ISSUE

THE NEW REPUBLIC

James Wood on John Updike
Richard A. Posner on "Gaylaw"
Fintan O'Toole on Irish Blarney
Peter Beinart on Bradley's Game

October 11, 1999



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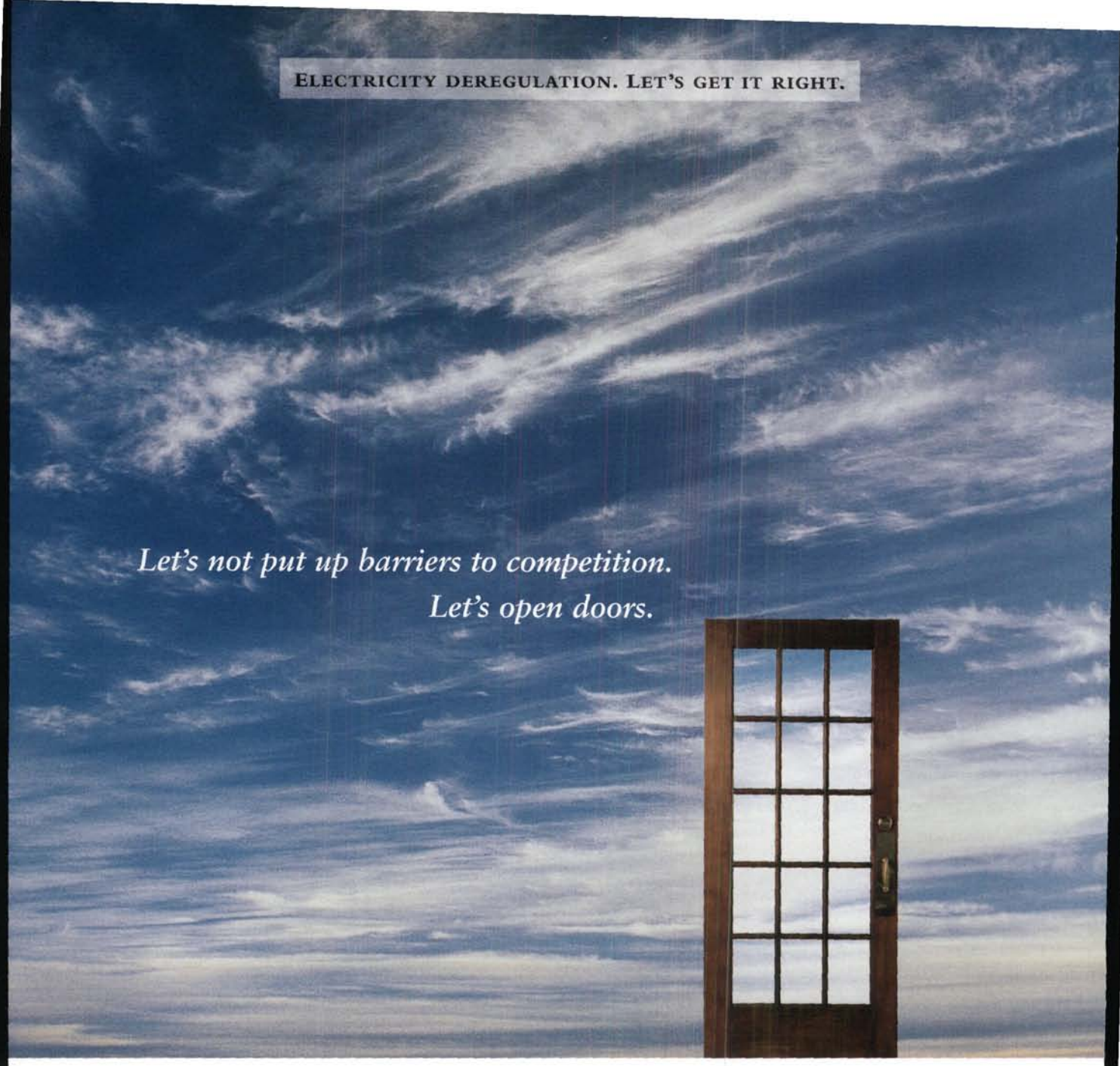

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THE NEW REPUBLIC

WASHINGTON, D.C.
OCTOBER 11, 1999
ISSUE 4,421

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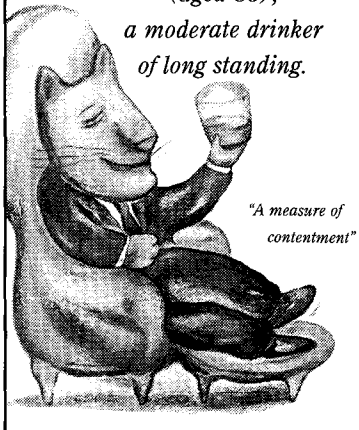

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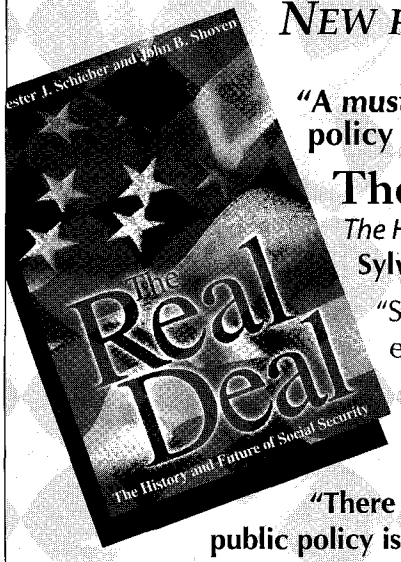

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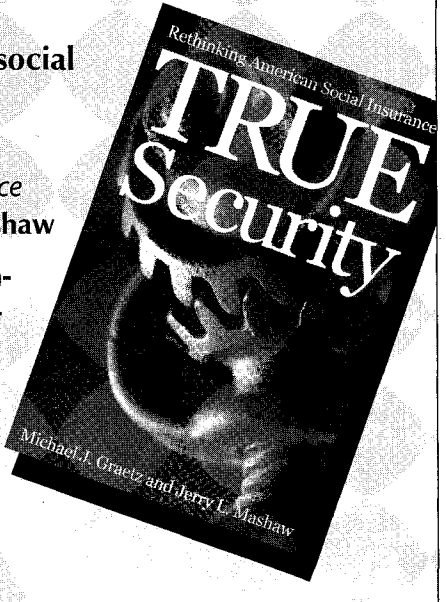

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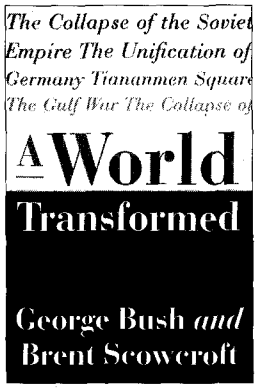
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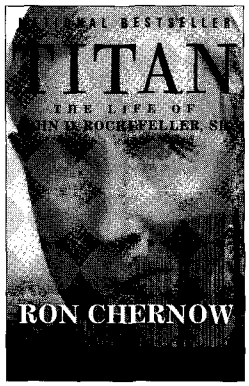

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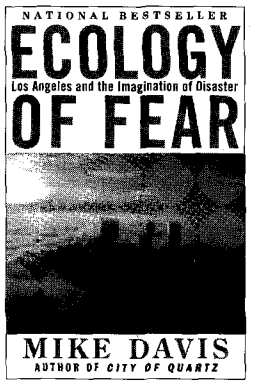

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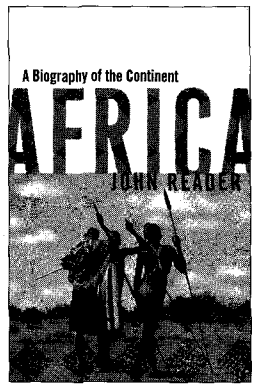

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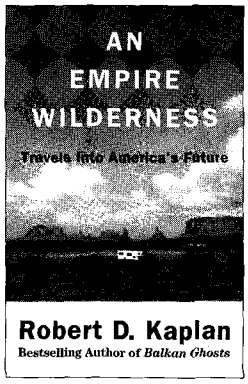

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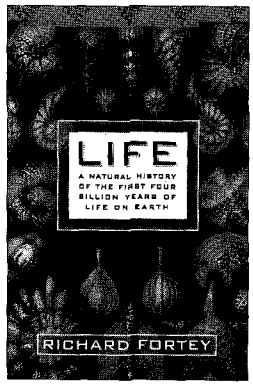

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CORRESPONDENCE

Disruption eruption

TO THE EDITORS:

As members of the National Research Council panel on endocrine disrupters, we read Gregg Easterbrook's gross mischaracterization of this issue ("Science Fiction," August 30) with considerable dismay. The tone and content of Easterbrook's commentary suggest a basic unfamiliarity with the scientific concepts involved and indicate that he has not read the report on which he comments. He states, for example, that "[t]he NRC declared the theory of endocrine disrupters 'rife with uncertainties'—possibly true but unsupported by experiments or health data." In fact, the theory of endocrine disruption rests on hundreds of laboratory experiments that demonstrate, in fetal mammals and other vertebrates, an exquisite sensitivity to hormone-disrupting compounds that can cause profound errors in development. Epidemiological evidence from human studies shows several trends in health data that are consistent with predictions based on these experiments with animals and the mechanisms of endocrine disruption. Unfortunately, the crucial studies to determine with scientific certainty whether those human health effects are caused by endocrine disruption have not been done. This is why the panel so strongly recommended an aggressive research agenda. To characterize endocrine-disrupting chemicals as an unlikely health threat, as Easterbrook does, in light of the evidence reviewed by the NRC panel and before this crucial research is completed is irresponsible and misguided.

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Tufts University
Boston, Massachusetts

LOUIS J. GUILLETTE, PH.D.
University of Florida
Gainesville, Florida

SHANNA SWAN, PH.D.
University of Missouri
Columbia, Missouri

FREDERICK VOM SAAL, PH.D.
University of Missouri
Columbia, Missouri

TO THE EDITORS:

Gregg Easterbrook's cavalier critique of our book, *Our Stolen Future*, is both a grossly inaccurate characterization of the book and a thoroughly misleading commentary on a recent National Academy of Sciences report examining the science of endocrine disruption. He claims that the academy's review shows that endocrine disruption is just another groundless environmental scare. In fact, the academy's report echoed nearly point for point many of the scientific findings and issues raised in *Our Stolen Future* concerning the possibility that some synthetic chemicals that mimic natural hormones have the potential to affect normal, hormone-guided human development. Easterbrook argues that the academy essentially declared endocrine-disrupting chemicals safe because the report recognizes substantial uncertainty in the research—as did we—and does not identify a "smoking gun." He is wrong. The academy panel concluded that there is strong evidence from studies of wildlife and laboratory animals that chemicals can interfere with the body's natural hormone system. They found some evidence from children that at least one group of endocrine-disrupting chemicals—PCBs—can affect human development at levels encountered in the environment today. Easterbrook also fails to mention the academy's finding that humans are experiencing the same kinds of health problems and developmental errors that endocrine-disrupting chemicals cause in animals and that animal studies are a vital guide to identifying health risks for people. This is not absolute proof of causation, but it explains why the academy so strongly recommends further research. If this were a groundless scare, no further research would be warranted.

THEO COLBORN, PH.D.
World Wildlife Fund
Washington, D.C.

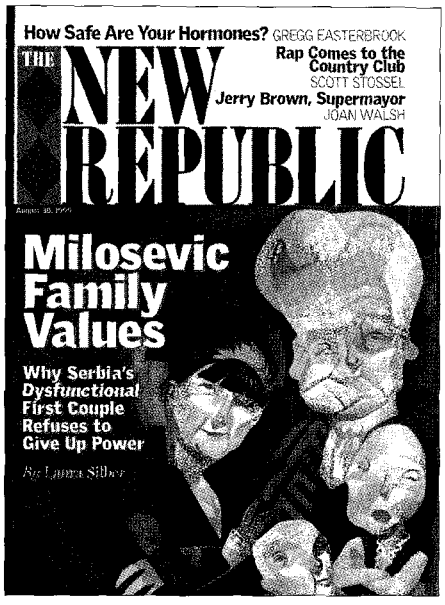
DIANNE DUMANOSKI
Newton, Massachusetts

JOHN PETERSON MYERS, PH.D.
W. Alton Jones Foundation
Charlottesville, Virginia

GREGG EASTERBROOK REPLIES:

The writers from the NRC panel—representing a small minority of its membership—object to my characterizing endocrine-disrupter theory as "possibly true but unsupported by experiments or health data." Then they themselves say of the theory, "Unfortunately, the crucial studies to determine with scientific certainty whether those human health effects are caused by endocrine disruption have not been done." The distance between these two statements is not great. They accuse me of "mischaracterization" and then say that what is needed is more research—without noting that my article concluded by endorsing further research. They denounce the article as "irresponsible and misguided," since its opinions differ from theirs. In rhetoric, when your argument is strong, you stick to points of reason; when your argument is weak, you impugn the other side's character and motives.

The authors of *Our Stolen Future* skip the preliminaries and proceed straight to the ad hominem attack. Unlike the academic writers, they do not trouble themselves to quote my article accurately. They assert, for example, that I call endocrine-disrupter theory "just another groundless environmental scare." Readers will scan the article in vain for this phrase or anything like it. What the article actually says is, "It is possible that a human endocrine-disrupter effect exists and yet eludes the National Academy of Sciences; some health problems of the past have been slow to reveal themselves to researchers. It is also possible that the endocrine disrupter is a case study in the art of the politically potent false alarm." The writers of *Our Stolen Future* also say that I "argu[e] that the academy essentially declared endocrine-disrupting chemicals safe." Again, readers will search in vain for this assertion. My experience in writing about environmental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affairs has been that in most cases those on the left of the debate cannot bring themselves simply to say, "We disagree with you," and let the battle of ideas begin; instead, they go directly to attacking the motives and integrity of anyone outside their camp. These letters exemplify that phenomenon.

Balthasar battle

TO THE EDITORS:

Having translated two of Hans Urs von Balthasar's books and written one introductory book on his thought, and having contributed frequently to the flagship journal of Catholic neoconservatism, *First Things*, I looked forward to Michael Sean Winters's review of David L. Schindler's book arguing that Balthasar's theology is fundamentally at odds with the views represented by the editor of *First Things*, Richard John Neuhaus, and his colleagues George Weigel and Michael Novak ("Balthasar's Feast," August 30).

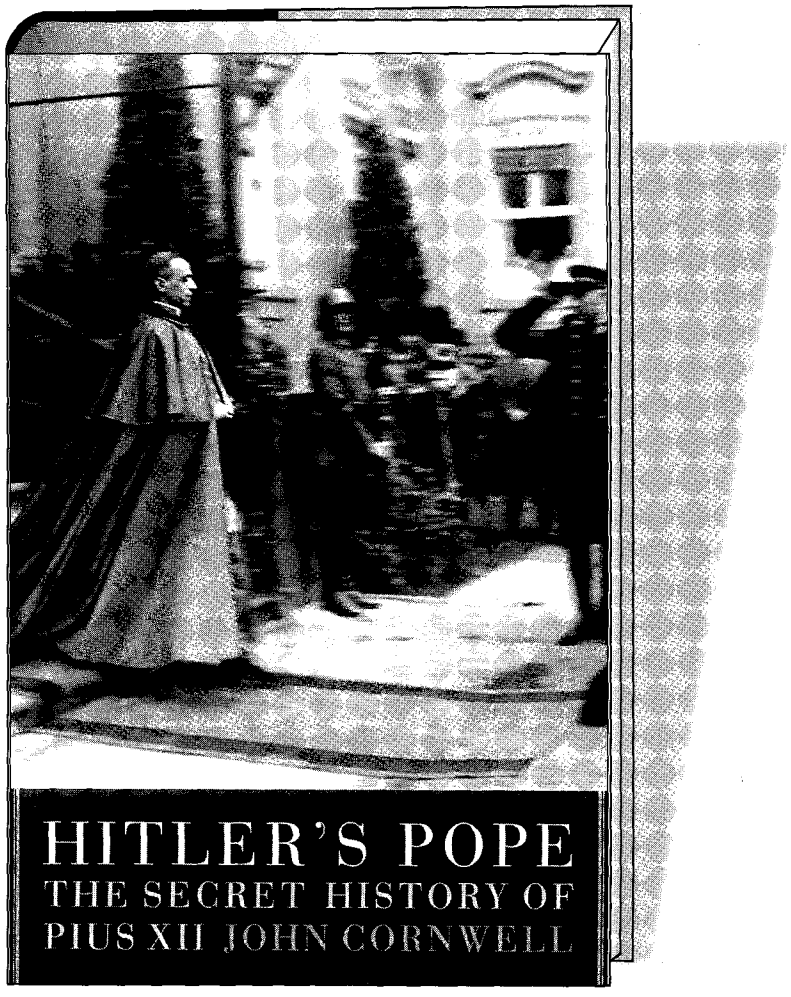
Winters's thesis collapses under the weight of its own incoherence. Early on, the reviewer avers that "theologically speaking, a state is a state, a throne is a throne, worldly power is worldly power." Besides being the theological equivalent of the hoary old thesis of the "moral equivalence" of the Soviet Union and the United States held by many liberals of the past (but not, to its credit, by THE NEW REPUBLIC), this absurd equation of the Roman Empire or absolute monarchy or Soviet totalitarianism with democratic capitalism is a thesis Winters cannot sustain for very long. Not three pages later, he admits that "regimes built upon negative freedom have entailed less tyranny than any other regimes," a truth which he reluctantly allows is "a powerful argument in [neoconservatives'] favor."

But, leaving aside the incoherence of what seems to be Winters's central argument, one cannot help but note the irony that TNR would offer the hospitality of its pages to a thesis that would seem to encourage the Catholic Church to abandon her engagement with liberalism. That the principles on which *First Things* adopts its positions differ in no fundamental way with those of TNR in the days of Walter Lippmann (and for the most part still today) seems to have eluded the notice of even the editors themselves.

Winters accuses Neuhaus of wearing a "smirk," a frequent charge against those who spot contradictions in their neighbors when these same neighbors cannot offer a rejoinder. It is odd, in that regard, that the reviewer did not notice at the same time that he wrote his own captious review with a sneer.

EDWARD T. OAKES, S.J.
Denver, Colorado

"Scathing... the feud over Pius XII is likely to intensify" —TIME MAGAZINE



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TRB

FROM WASHINGTON

Game Boy

I HAVE A problem with Bill Bradley. Actually, that's not quite right. I like Bill Bradley fine, but I have a problem with his effect on others—particularly male journalists. Why is it that reporters and headline writers from America's most august publications, gentlemen usually neuralgic about the use of cliché, insist on penning sentences such as "Bradley's on the Election Court with His Eyes on the Ball"? This particular specimen comes from the July 7 *Orlando Sentinel*, but practically no institution in the fourth estate has clean hands: "Bradley on a Fast Break..." (*The Washington Post*, May 2), "One-on-One with Gore" (*The New York Times*, April 20), "The Gore-Bradley Tip-Off" (*The Christian Science Monitor*, March 19), "Tested Player Sets Up His Move" (*Newsday*, April 21).

It's bad enough when former athletes speak this way themselves—at benefits ("Score a touchdown against muscular dystrophy!"), in commercials ("Hit a home run at Bob's Muffler Palace!"), or on the stump. Jack Kemp did it so often in 1996 that the Dole campaign started to grumble. But ex-athletes, even ex-athletes-turned-politicians, don't write for a living. If they declare their adult endeavors analogous to a game they played when they were 25, well, that's the material they have on hand. But when reporters insist that the actions of men who have been in politics for decades must be analogous to a game they played when they were 25, it suggests a lack of journalistic imagination. Or a need to demonstrate their facility with sports lingo, thus proving they are not eggheads. (Practically every big-time conservative political commentator seems to have sounded off in *The Weekly Standard* about baseball or football, often detailing which sports or teams are liberal or conservative. I'm still waiting for, say, Robert Novak's musings about the partisan divisions in modern dance.) In either case, I think the problem could be eliminated were Bradley covered by an all-female press corps—an experiment that obviously could not have been attempted on the Clinton campaign.

Bradley, thankfully, does not often speak of taking Al Gore off the dribble. But there is another bad habit, common among pro-athletes-turned-politicians, that he indulges more liberally: Bradley often suggests that his experience in the heavily African American world of professional sports has provided him with unique insight into American race relations. In *Time Present, Time Past*, he writes, "I began to understand distrust and suspicion. I came to know the meaning of certain looks and certain codes ... I sensed the tension created by always being on guard, by never totally relaxing." I don't think Bradley is at all cynical about this. I think he believes it to the depths of his being. But it doesn't make any sense.

Bradley is really implying two different things when he speaks this way. One is plausible but meaningless; the other is meaningful but implausible. The first is that, because he spent years in a multiracial environment, he cares more about African Americans than most white politicians do. Maybe so. Your typical white suburban businessman- or lawyer-turned-suburban-politician won't have as many black acquaintances or multiracial memories as an ex-athlete. He's not as likely to have race on the brain. But so what? Ward Connerly spends a lot of time thinking about race, and he cares a lot about African Americans. If he didn't care so much, he probably wouldn't have devoted his life to repealing affirmative action. Most liberals probably wish he cared a little less. Interaction might breed concern, but concern by itself has no ideological content.

Bradley's implication, of course, is that it does—that his interracial experience led naturally to concern about racism, which led naturally to his support for affirmative action, government programs for the inner city, etc. That's a serious claim, but it's illogical as theory, and it's false empirically. The military is the most integrated major institution in America, yet white officers are more likely than whites at large to vote Republican and are thus less likely to support Bradley's policies on race. (Black servicemen are also further to the right than blacks overall, which either means that integration causes racial conservatism or, much more likely, that it's irrelevant to it. What matters is the ethos of the institution doing the integrating.) Steve Largent played wide receiver for the Seattle Seahawks for 14 years before winning a House seat from Oklahoma. When I asked him what the NFL had taught him about race, he said, "I've seen personally, and it's been proven beyond any doubt, that the type of help that big government was giving was doing more harm than good." In other words, Largent, an evangelical Republican from one of the most conservative parts of the country, learned from his football career what other conservative Republicans managed to learn elsewhere.

But Bradley's point may be subtler: that not all racial interaction leads to "progressive" views, just interaction by equals. After all, no presidential candidate (and certainly no liberal presidential candidate) would boast that he understands African Americans because he employed a black maid. But how exactly do you define which relationships are equal? Bradley was a paradigmatic "white" basketball player praised for all the qualities white athletes are always praised for: discipline, unselfishness, intelligence. And, whether he liked it or not, black contemporaries such as Cazzie Russell, Bradley's college rival and Knicks teammate, were noted for their pure athleticism, as black players so often are. It is not Bradley's fault that sponsors offered him endorsement deals because of his race (to his great credit, he declined). And it is not his fault that part of his allure today is that he reminds people of a time when the NBA was less crass, less thuggish, and, implicitly related in the minds of many, less black. (Oddly, even as he panders to Al Sharpton and the racial left, Bradley's basketball background assures him some support on the racial right, because for a certain category of middle-aged white men he is defined *not* so much in opposition to Al Gore as in opposition to Allen Iverson.) But it all goes to show that Bradley's belief that he and his teammates were equals is not simply a statement of fact; it is a product of ideology.

Bradley's conviction that his experience of diversity engendered his commitment to racial justice is not unusual. It is a common notion in contemporary America. And it is lovely, but it is also dangerously naïve. Saying that bigotry is the result of ignorance is a way of not taking it seriously. Bigotry is not only the product of ignorance; it is also the product of knowledge. This knowledge is filtered, of course, through chauvinist ideology, but all knowledge is filtered through ideology. And that is why the argument for human equality must be waged at the level of moral principle, as a commitment that holds irrespective of, or even counter to, personal experience. You cannot simply throw people together and expect that evidence from everyday life will make human equality obvious. Despite the advances of the last half-century, it is still not obvious to most people on the planet, and not because they don't know the people they hate. America needs to understand this about the Balkans. College administrators need to understand it about their campuses. And Bill Bradley needs to understand it about his own life.

PETER BEINART

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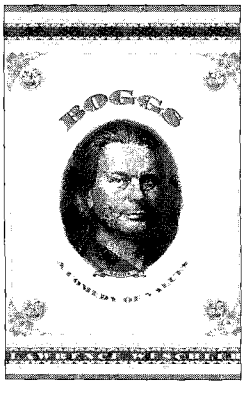

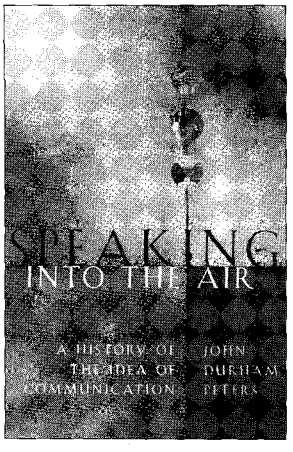

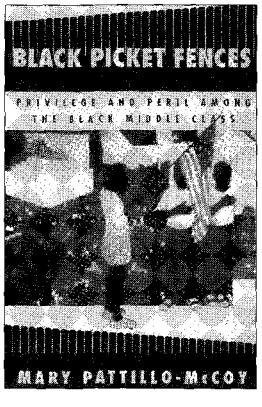

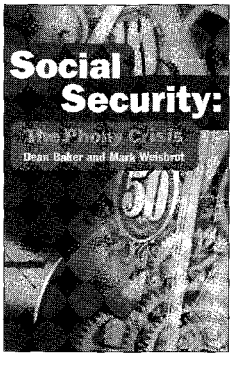

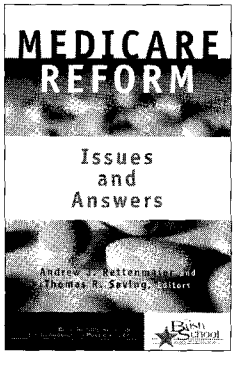

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AUSTRALIA DISPATCH

Up Under

THE ARRIVAL OF Australian troops in East Timor marks the beginning not merely of an important international peacekeeping mission but also of a new role for Australia in the international arena. Long accustomed to playing second fiddle to Western powers such as the United Kingdom or the United States, Australia, for the first time in its history, is taking the lead in mounting a major—albeit regional—international initiative. Perhaps not coincidentally, this foray onto the world stage is taking place amid a heated domestic debate about Australia's national identity. At issue is a November 6 referendum in which Australia's citizens will be asked to decide whether their nation should continue to be headed by Great Britain's Queen Elizabeth II or become a republic.

On one level, the question—raised to the level of government initiative by then-Prime Minister Paul Keating in 1993 after lying quiescent for decades—seems almost academic. Over the course of this century, Australia has progressively demanded increased autonomy, and Britain has conceded it. Today, Australia is a republic in all but name. True, the queen technically appoints Australia's head of state, the governor-general—her official representative, in whom command of the Australian military is vested and who may exercise substantial powers such as firing the prime minister. But that appointment has been made on the basis of the prime minister's recommendation, and, since 1931, no monarch has contested it.

Australia has also distanced itself culturally from its motherland. Australians play cricket the way the English do but have their own rules for rugby, they eat a variant of Marmite at breakfast but call it Vegemite, and they no longer follow plans derived from Kew when replanting their gardens but favor native plants instead.

Even in the realm of symbolism, Australia looks pretty republican. Elizabeth II bears the title of Queen of Australia as well as Queen of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. Yet she very rarely appears as the former, even though she never ceases to be the latter. Indeed, Elizabeth II has only visited her purported Australian kingdom occasionally. Thus, these days when, as with the inauguration of the September 2000 Olympic Games in Sydney, the presence of Australia's official head of state is conventionally required, there is little danger that Elizabeth II will actually make an appearance. In the case of the games, for instance, the current prime minister, John Howard, found an easy way to avoid having to tell her that she would not be welcome: he invited her to visit next March. Considering the infrequency of the queen's visits to Australia, it is safe to assume she will not make a second trip in September.

Given Australia's de facto status as a republic, why should the outcome of the referendum matter? The monarchists argue that the current system has worked exceedingly well, providing decades of stability with minimal outside interference. In other words, if it ain't broke, don't fix it. The monarchists can also tap into reservoirs of loyalty and affection for Elizabeth II not unlike those that keep kings and queens safely atop their thrones throughout northern Europe. During a recent train ride from the Blue Mountains to Sydney, an eleven-year-old interrupted his questions about New York celebrities to remark to me that Australia should stick with England. "We've done well with them," he explained. And ditching the queen would be tantamount to betraying the memory of "our ancestors," who fought side by side with the English in war after war. (*I did not remind him* that his grandfather was Portuguese.) It is not only eleven-year-olds and ladies with blue-tinted hair who feel this way.

The monarchists also draw on the fears of people who have no particular affection for the English or for Elizabeth II. Many Australians are immigrants from unstable democracies, and, for some of them, at least, republicanism and turmoil appear coterminous. And then there are those who reflect on the margins of liberty this system has afforded Australians: there have been two Jewish governor-generals, whose nominations could pass in an appointment-based system but whose candidacies would more likely have died in the popularity—and populistic—contests electoral politics engender.

Yet even many Australians who are uneasy about change cannot quite bring themselves to defend the monarchy as an institution of modern governance. And, however pro forma, the monarchist trappings still grate. For instance, in 1975, then-Governor-General Sir John Kerr actually availed himself of his powers and fired Prime Minister Gough Whitlam. Similarly, there is something disturbing about the fact that command of the military is technically vested not in the prime minister but in the unelected governor-general.

According to current polls, the majority of Australians sympathize with this position. Still, there's a reasonable chance that they will nonetheless vote against the republican side in the referendum. That's at least partly because the republican option would replace the queen and the governor-general with a president appointed by a two-thirds majority of parliament. Many Australians dislike central authority; they feel that prime ministers have excessive power and that entrusting the choice of the head of state to parliament will merely reinforce (or, at least, insufficiently weaken) that power. The republican cause is best served, in their view, by defeating the referendum as it is currently worded and waiting for the next round—for then, they expect, the question will deal with a president to be voted for in a popular election.

This has led Australia's more impatient republicans—who favor passing the referendum now and fine-tuning the niceties of the presidential model later—to charge that the monarchists have unfairly played on divisions within republican ranks by tying the issue of the republic to the mode of election of the future head of state. But Prime Minister Howard, who was ultimately responsible for drafting the language of the referendum, and his supporters maintain that there was a good reason for linking the two issues. For one thing, some may see the virtue of avoiding the French conundrum of "cohabitation"—in other words, the difficulty of governing when the president of one party has to contend with a prime minister of another. Howard—who, unlike several members of his cabinet, is a convinced supporter of the status quo—may also have viewed linking the question of whether to change the constitution with the question of how to change it as being necessary to avoid leaping into the unknown.

Nevertheless, in a sense, Australia is taking just such a leap. If the nineteenth century was the age of the continent's discovery and settlement and the twentieth century is the age of its transition from colony to full-fledged nation, the twenty-first century—whatever the outcome of this particular referendum—promises to be the age of Australia's emergence as an independent player in the international arena, with all the status and responsibility that this role entails.

YASMINE ERGAS

The author is a lawyer who practices in New York City.

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INFORMATION FOR A CHANGING WORLD

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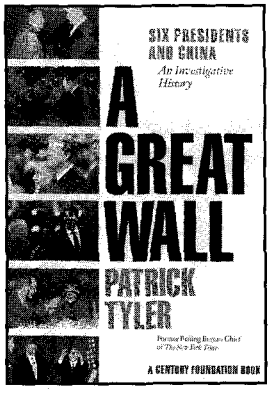

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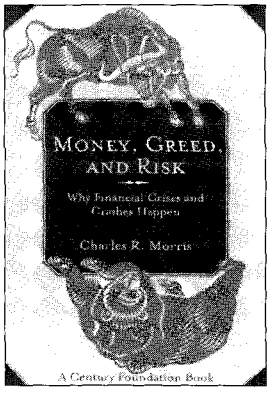

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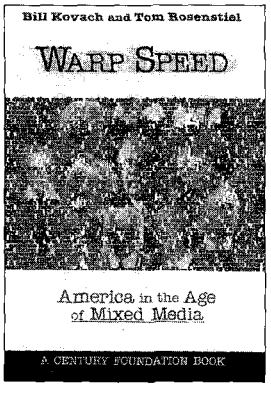

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This is also very troubling news for the States who have already deregulated—and must now rewrite their laws at the insistence of the federal government or see their state-based reforms litigated in the federal courts. It is even more punitive for States who are still developing restructuring plans and who will likely find the new heavy-handed federal policy prescriptions repugnant.

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Taiwan's Triumph

WITHIN HOURS OF the devastating earthquake in Taiwan, citizens of the island were already voicing their concerns about whether the death toll could have been lower if government authorities had done a better job enforcing strict earthquake-proofing building codes. Chen Jianren, a spokesman for the Taiwanese government, immediately responded. "There may be problems with some developers," he conceded. "The quality of buildings, that must be investigated."

We don't know for sure whether the huge death toll from last week's temblor really was worsened because of lax or corrupt government action—no one does yet. Rather, our point is that it struck no one in Taiwan as anything but perfectly normal and natural that the citizenry should raise such questions immediately and openly and that the government should feel constrained at least to promise action. The reason for this, quite simply, is that Taiwan is a rapidly consolidating democracy. The government must take its people's views and needs into account—after all, there's a presidential election coming up in March. This gives the authorities every incentive to repair the damage quickly and to correct whatever might be wrong with current law enforcement. Otherwise, they'll be out of power. How different things would be if the quake had struck only a few miles away, across the Taiwan Strait, on the Communist mainland.

The story of Taiwan's short-term tragedy cannot detract from the story of Taiwan's long-term triumph. The People's Republic of China is gearing up for its massive fiftieth anniversary commemoration on October 1. The day will pass with no great fanfare in Taiwan, even though it is also the de facto half-century anniversary of the creation of a different kind of China on the island to which Chiang Kai-shek's forces finally retreated. In those 50 years, the people of Taiwan have seen government repression and economic deprivation under Chiang's Kuomintang party give way to a renaissance of economic prosperity and political freedom. Indeed, at just the moment the People's Republic was launching its crackdown at Tiananmen Square, Chiang's heirs were laying the groundwork for the eventual transition to the current, popularly elected government.

Today, Taiwan is not only far freer than mainland China, it is also many, many times more prosperous. With only 22 million people, compared to 1.2 billion on the mainland, Taiwan produces a GNP of about $280 billion per year—fully one-third of what the People's Republic produces. Taiwan has long since joined the ranks of the world's major high-tech players. Indeed, two days after the earthquake, *The Wall Street Journal* reported on concerns that the quake might trigger shortages in computer chips, of which Taiwan is one of the world's leading producers. Not only is Taiwan far richer in absolute terms than Communist China, its bounty is distributed more fairly. In 1995, the ratio between the top one-fifth of Taiwanese income-earners and the bottom one-fifth was 5.34-to-1. In Communist China, the ratio was 8.6-to-1, according to the World Bank. The value of Taiwan's trade with the United States is far larger, relative to the country's size, than China's is, and the balance is more nearly even.

This enormous feat of political and economic development is above all due to the hard work of the Taiwanese people themselves. But it's worth recalling the seminal role of the United States. A key step was the land reform of the 1950s, a U.S.-supervised and -supported radical redistribution of land that was not free of coercion but was far gentler and, hence, more productive than the irrational and violent collectivization that Mao Zedong carried out on his side of the strait. U.S. financial aid also helped ease Taiwan's transition to an industrial economy, as did strategic investments by Japan. Political democratization was largely the fruit of American pressure on the authorities in Taipei, including U.S. politicians' support for pro-democracy advocates. All of this was made possible by the security umbrella the United States extended to the island, including generous military aid, without which Mao might well have tried to deflect attention from his catastrophic rule by lashing out across the strait.

Today, however, the U.S. commitment to Taiwan seems more equivocal than it has been at any point since President Nixon's opening to Beijing in 1972. That cold war era gambit was defensible as a means of drawing China closer to our side in the contest with the even more dangerous Soviet Union. But the necessary cost of the pro-Beijing tilt of every U.S. president since then has been a distancing from Taiwan, over which China still aggressively asserts sovereignty.

U.S. policy on this matter has been guided by the 1972 Shanghai communiqué, which expresses official U.S. agnosticism on the ultimate question of "one China," and by the Taiwan Relations Act of 1979, which makes an ambiguous

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promise of support to Taiwan in the event of Chinese attack. Until now, these diplomatic vagaries have been enough to keep China from feeling free to launch an attack and Taiwan from feeling authorized to provoke one.

However, three factors have converged to destabilize the situation in recent months. One is the rise of pugnacious nationalism as an ideological weapon in Beijing's arsenal. Another is the advent of democracy in Taiwan, which has inconveniently injected the feelings of Taiwan's increasingly independence-minded people into the equation. And the third, alas, is the Clinton administration's apparent desire to placate the People's Republic at nearly any price, which has led the president to embrace China's view that, for instance, Taiwan should not be permitted to join any international organization for which state status is a prerequisite.

American policy must not overbalance. Taiwan is not only a success story on its own terms (the first democratic Chinese government in 5,000 years) but also a state, de facto if not de jure, that forms part of a belt of prosperous East Asian democracies, including Japan and South Korea. China sees this ring of freedom as a menacing manifestation of American hegemony. Americans should see these republics as our best friends in an increasingly unfriendly region. Of course, the difficult matter of Taiwan's official status would be best settled short of war, through negotiations between Beijing and Taipei, if possible. But no such solution will be possible unless America makes it abundantly and consistently clear to Beijing that we consider it an imperative—both strategic and moral—that Taiwan should never be left to deal with China all by itself. ■

NOTEBOOK

ROLL OVER, JEFFERSON: "The history of mind has of course never been a bland continuity. There have always been periods when mind shines forth with a special luminosity and periods when it withdraws into the shadows." So said Lionel Trilling in Washington in 1972, at the conclusion of the first Thomas Jefferson Lecture in the Humanities of the National Endowment for the Humanities. The subject of his lecture was "Mind in the Modern World," and it delivered a very unhappy report on the career of the intellectual ideal in contemporary America. Still, the fact that Lionel Trilling was lecturing on the "retraction of mind" at the invitation of the government, in the capital, and with a very considerable honorarium of taxpayers' money, meant that mind in America had not completely retracted. Some of the most rigorous thinkers and accomplished scholars in America followed, and the Jefferson Lecture became a small jewel of American culture. Dissolve to the Clinton years. More precisely, dissolve *in* the Clinton years, which is what the Jefferson Lecture did. An early premonition of the anti-intellectual tendency came in 1994, when the mantle of Lionel Trilling, C. Vann Woodward, John Hope Franklin, Leszek Kolakowski, Sidney Hook, Bernard Knox, and Gertrude Himmelfarb was placed, by Sheldon Hackney, the first head of the NEH under Clinton, on the shoulders of Gwendolyn Brooks. But some sort of rock bottom was hit last week, when William Ferris, the current head of the NEH, announced that his invitation to deliver the Jefferson Lecture for 2000 had been issued to Bill Clinton. Ferris defended his reform with his well-known populist conception of culture. "We are expanding the endowment to reach the whole country," he said. We're opening all the doors and windows." In a sense, he is right: a whole lot of doors and windows would have to be opened in the discussion of the humanities before Bill Clinton could be legitimately let in. The president is neither a serious scholar nor a serious thinker. He is merely the president. Why should anyone care about his views—or the views of his speechwriters—on themes about which he knows little or nothing? But such an objection is rank elitism for Ferris. He appealed to "the Jeffersonian sense that every citizen has the right to express their thoughts about the nature of democracy." Which is to say, every citizen has a right to deliver the Jefferson Lecture; and no citizen should recognize, or honor, the existence of greater knowledge or greater reflection than his or her own. It is an apposite notion in this day of Ventura, Buchanan, Beatty, and Trump; and it is also an idiotic notion. By this pseudo-democratic logic, Bill Clinton should also be invited to play his saxophone at Lincoln Center. After all, what's so special about Sonny Rollins? But then, in what surely counts as a miracle in the Clinton administration, the president declined the NEH's invitation. Whatever his reasons, Bill Clinton has struck a small blow against the retraction of mind. Yet there remains the discouraging spectacle of William Ferris, who is not a democrat but a vulgarian, not a populist but a leveler, not a custodian of culture but a menace to it.

A SIMPLE PLAN: President Andrés Pastrana of Colombia was in Washington this week pitching what he's calling his "Plan Colombia," which he argues will save his country from economic collapse, guerrilla insurgency, and increasing drug traffic. Pastrana needs $3.5 billion in international aid, which Colombia pledges to match. The United States has already granted $289 million this fiscal year, and, in asking for more U.S. help, Pastrana is up against both the anti-foreign-aid mood on Capitol Hill and human rights groups that remember how past aid went to brutal elements of Colombia's police. Republicans, in particular, have reservations about Pastrana's dealings with the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC). Last year, Pastrana sought to entice the FARC into a peace deal by withdrawing the army from a large chunk of rebel-held territory. But, if anything, the FARC has *increased* the violence of its attacks since then. Pastrana failed largely because, without sufficient military power, he was negotiating from a position of weakness. Fair point. Therefore, the U.S. should provide military aid—albeit under the guise of anti-drug assistance—to even the balance. This is hardly risk-free. But the only thing worse than sending aid to Colombia would be what might happen if we do not. ■

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Republicans hijack the e-commerce debate.

Taxing Issue

By JOHN B. JUDIS

NEW YORK

GOVERNMENT-APPOINTED BIPARTISAN commissions have played an important role in recent American politics. The social security commission in the early '80s and the commission on closing military bases in the early '90s both helped resolve thorny issues that legislators, beholden to special interests, couldn't settle on their own. The Advisory Commission on Electronic Commerce is supposed to serve the same purpose for the public policy crisis created by the shift of commerce away from local merchants and onto the Internet.

By 2003, states and cities could lose as much as $15 billion in sales tax revenues because of a shift from old-fashioned retail shopping to catalog and Internet sales, according to the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. That's the equivalent of $50,000-a-year salaries for 300,000 teachers. What's more, the shift to Internet sales would place the burden of already regressive sales taxes even more disproportionately on low-income Americans, who are least likely to buy products over the Internet or from catalogs. Most public officials—particularly those at the state and local level—believe such sales must be taxed. But some conservative Republicans, particularly those in the House and Senate leadership, don't want to be associated with any tax increase, even a manifestly reasonable one that merely eliminates a disparity among categories of businesses. And many Internet and mail-order merchants resist losing their advantage over local retailers.

STEVE McCRACKEN

Unable to agree on a solution, Congress passed the Internet Freedom Act in 1998, creating a three-year moratorium on Internet taxes and establishing a 19-member commission charged with developing a plan by April 2000. The members of the commission, both industry representatives and public officials, were appointed by the Republican and Democratic congressional leadership and by the Clinton administration. If the commission conforms to the traditional role of such commissions—forging compromises—it will propose a way to tax Internet purchases that won't unnecessarily check the growth of online commerce. Indeed, the commission does contain a potential majority of business leaders and public officials trying to devise such a plan. But a determined minority of conservative anti-taxers and business lobbyists, who oppose this majority, are turning the Internet commission into an ideological circus.

THE MAJORITY SURFACED at the commission's first meeting, which took place in Williamsburg, Virginia, last June. Among the public officials, it includes Mike Leavitt, the Republican governor of Utah; Ron Kirk, the Democratic mayor of Dallas; and the three administration appointees. On the business side, it includes Charles Schwab CEO David Pottruck; John Sidgmore, vice chairman of MCI WorldCom; Ted Waitt, CEO of Gateway; and AT&T CEO C. Michael Armstrong. The business leaders are willing to accept the imposition of sales taxes if the states and cities would simplify and standardize the current tax system. (Vendors must now deal with some 7,000 different sales tax jurisdictions.)

But the opposition to any tax compromise also surfaced. The opposition consists of commissioners appointed by Senate Majority Leader Trent Lott and then-Speaker of the House Newt Gingrich, and it includes Virginia Governor James Gilmore, chairman of the commission; Grover Norquist, president of Americans for Tax Reform and a lobbyist for Microsoft; Dean Andal, a California Republican official who also runs a real estate and banking business; and Stan Sokul of the Direct Marketing Association, which lobbies for catalog and e-commerce businesses.

Gilmore quickly made his own sentiments apparent by appointing the wife of a lobbyist for the Electronic Industries Alliance as the commission's executive director and installing the commission at the lobbying firm's offices. (When Leavitt complained of a conflict of interest, Norquist accused him of sexism.) After the Williamsburg meeting, Gilmore assured *BusinessWeek* that the Internet would make the sales tax itself obsolete: "The emergence of a whole new form of commerce may bring the frailty of the sales tax to the surface." Gilmore also acceded to requests from Norquist and his anti-tax allies that obscure right-wing apparatchiks be allowed to speak at the second meeting.

At that session, which was held in New York on September 14 and 15, House Majority Leader Dick Armey and House

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Majority Whip Tom DeLay circulated a letter declaring their opposition to "new taxes on the Internet" and accusing the commission of focusing on "*how* to tax the Internet rather than *whether* to tax the Internet." But the first session, in a packed conference room at the Millennium Hotel, did not take up taxes on Internet purchases. It was devoted to the testimony of three speakers who favored rescinding a three percent national tax on telecommunications. The speakers included Raymond Keating of the Small Business Survival Committee, a group that Norquist helped to establish, as well as Jeffrey Eisenach of the Progress & Freedom Foundation, an organization started by Gingrich. Norquist then introduced a resolution attacking the tax, which he labeled the "Gore tax," even though it existed in various forms for many decades before the current vice president became a supporter.

Most of the commissioners were not pleased to be spending their time listening to people they had never heard of debate questions that were not part of the commission's legislative mandate. ("The notion that state and local governments need additional revenues is absurd. I've spent months working on my next book. Trust me!" Keating exclaimed.) Even AT&T's Armstrong, who favors eliminating the telecommunications tax, complained. During one intermission, an official from a major accounting firm lamented privately that the "right-wing fringe" was dominating the meeting. It reminded me of one of these 1960s antiwar meetings in which some tiny Trotskyist or Maoist sect manipulated a moderate majority into voting on whether or not to support world revolution.

On the second day, after the commission had finally heard relevant testimony about the Internet and taxes, Leavitt tried to consolidate the silent majority. He set out criteria for a plan that included tax simplification and the equal treatment of all sellers, and he proposed that a group within the National Governor's Association be asked to come up with a proposal that the committee could consider during its next meeting, in December. Pottruck, Armstrong, and Time Warner President Richard Parsons backed the essence of Leavitt's plan, and it looked as if it might be adopted.

But then Gilmore, Norquist, and the anti-tax faction entered the fray. Norquist argued that the public and the House Republican leadership opposed taxes on Internet purchases. Gilmore declared that he opposed the criteria. Norquist called on the commissioners to vote first on whether the plan had to result in no new net taxes. Norquist's proposal, if accepted, would have defeated the purpose of any compromise. Sokul complained that Leavitt and the governors had a "protectionist interest" in the result.

Gilmore then announced that he had to cut the debate short so that he could return to Virginia to prepare for Hurricane Floyd. Wielding his power as chairman, he declared that the entire matter should be sent to a new drafting committee. The Leavitt-Pottruck forces, caught off guard, consented, and Gilmore appointed a drafting committee that included himself, Sokul and Andal. Leavitt's proposal had been shelved.

Gateway's Joe Heubach expressed his frustration with the meeting and with Gilmore's role. "There is a deal to be made," he said. "A silent majority favors it, but Gilmore is a one-term governor who wants to run for the Senate and doesn't want to be seen favoring a tax." A spokeswoman for Gilmore insists his position was based on principle: "The governor has made no bones that he is philosophically opposed to taxes and tax increases." But, she added, "obviously, there are politics going on."

It's still possible the commission could come up with a constructive compromise, but to do so the silent majority must first develop a strategy for overcoming Gilmore and Norquist. A good beginning might be simply to replace Gilmore, who was elected chairman by the commissioners themselves, with Leavitt, who, despite being a conservative Republican from one of the most conservative states, has found himself cast as a flaming liberal by Norquist and Gilmore.

As for Norquist, some of the CEOs might consider calling his employers in Redmond, Washington. As a Microsoft lobbyist, he occupies one of the commission's industry slots. Yet introducing resolutions pillorying the vice president or gaining prime time for Keating can't be too high on Microsoft's agenda. Perhaps Bill Gates would be interested to learn that his lobbying budget is financing the agenda of the House Republican leadership. ■

The Constitution is back.

Scandalized

By Akhil Reed Amar

When the president's men (and women) engage in wrongdoing, or aid and abet those who do, who can properly enforce the law against the law enforcement branch? Our Constitution tries to solve this problem with an ingenious scheme centered on powers of congressional oversight and impeachment, protection of opposition parties and the press, and reliance on a vigilant citizenry and regular elections. A quarter-century ago, this blueprint worked precisely as planned to fell Richard Nixon. But post-Watergate reformers rushed in to fix what wasn't really broken, creating a legal contraption based on unelected judges' picking hugely powerful and politically unaccountable independent counsels. Predictably, these counsels—Lawrence Walsh, Ken Starr, and others—ran amok.

Today, the reformers' machinery lies in ruins—the 1978 Ethics in Government Act expired in June and will not be revived anytime soon. Existing independent counsels can wrap up pending investigations, but judges may not appoint any new investigators. Thus, the two most recent administration scandals—the alleged Waco cover-up and the flap over President Clinton's granting clemency to imprisoned Puerto Rican terrorists—mark a return to the traditional system. Unlike so many of the executive branch investigations of recent years, these two scandals will be resolved as

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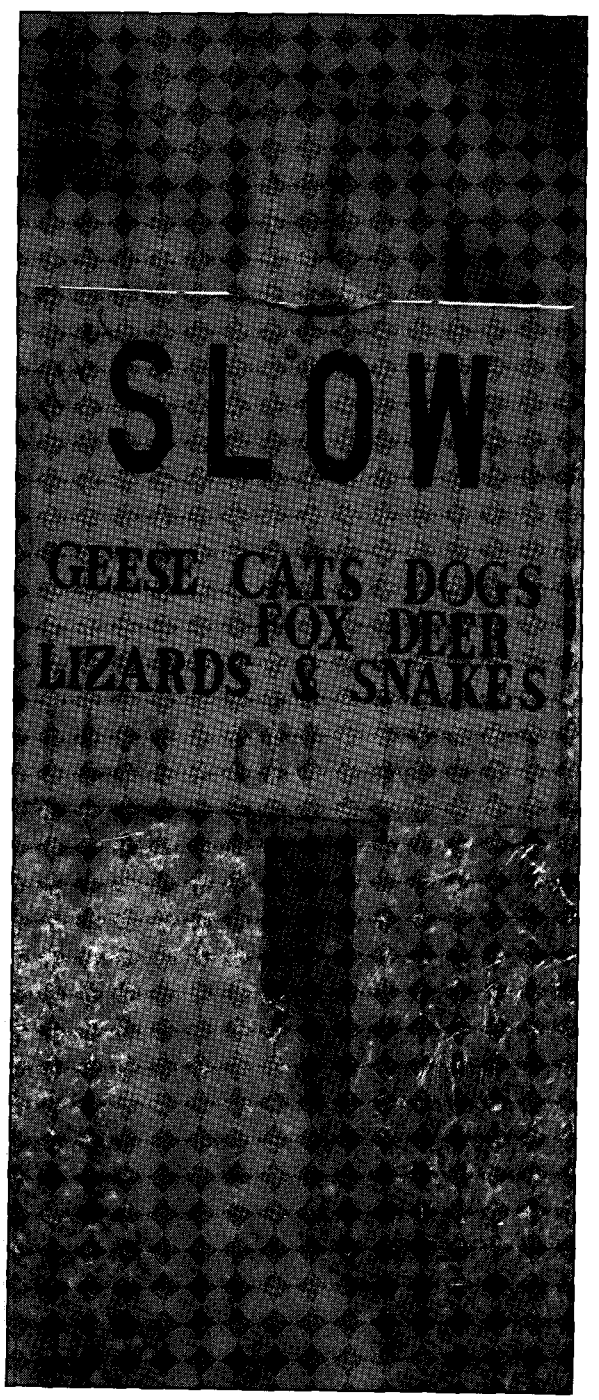

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the Constitution actually provides: not by a few folks in black robes behind closed doors or by unaccountable counsels and their unelected staffs, but by the open and democratic actions of hundreds of members of Congress, thousands of journalists, and millions of voters.

LET'S START WITH Waco. True, at first glance it might appear as though the old 1978 ethics act—which authorized a three-judge panel to pick an independent counsel who would wield broad powers and operate outside the Justice Department's supervision—would have been helpful here. If federal agencies committed crimes or even simply tried to hide their blunders, surely we cannot trust those very agencies—the Justice Department and the FBI—to set things right. If Attorney General Janet Reno personally botched the siege or bungled the investigation, obviously we now need someone other than Reno—someone competent and credible—to sort things out.

It's also true that Reno herself was among those who helped kill the 1978 ethics act. This spring, after having previously testified in favor of the statute, Reno reversed course, arguing that, in the future, the attorney general, not a panel of judges, should appoint outside counsel in appropriate cases. Formally the counsel should answer to her—not to the judges—and she should have the unilateral and unreviewable right to fire the counsel at will. (Under the statute, counsels could only be fired for "good cause," with the judges having the last word on the meaning of this standard.) Reno's critics, then, might have a field day here: her about-face seems suspicious, her proposal expands her own power, and her solution conjures up images of Nixon's Saturday Night Massacre.

But it is not particularly surprising that Reno came to town supporting the independent counsel statute; when she assumed office, she had relatively little understanding of how things work in Washington. Coming from Florida, she had seen independent counsel laws operate rather well. But in Florida—and virtually every other state—the executive branch is not designed to be unitary; attorneys general are constitutionally separate from governors. At the federal level, however, the attorney general serves at the pleasure of the president, in whom *all* executive power is vested; a wholly independent prosecutor doesn't fit into this template.

State law enforcement rarely affects international relations, whereas federal law enforcement more routinely touches upon foreign affairs. For example, the plight of American hostages in the Middle East (the Oliver North case), the status of Puerto Rico under international law (the FALN case), and the gravity of espionage on behalf of Israel (the Jonathan Pollard case) are issues that fall squarely within the president's portfolio. Independent investigations wholly inattentive to the president's foreign policy goals and duties are constitutionally awkward. Only after several years in the job did Reno begin to grasp that, constitutionally, she wasn't in Florida anymore—that a system that might work in individual states cannot work for the nation.

Most importantly, although Reno's proposed solution—to let herself handpick outside investigators in cases of conflict of interest—might at first seem self-aggrandizing, in important ways it actually gives outside investigators a *stronger* political base, unless they wholly forfeit the public's confidence through their own mistakes. Compare Starr with Jack Danforth, the man the administration has appointed to look into the Waco affair. Before his appointment, Starr, like Danforth, enjoyed an impressive reputation for fairness, honesty, and moderation. But, from the instant Starr took office, he was vulnerable to attack on the grounds of having been picked by right-wing judges huddling with right-wing senators as part of a vast right-wing conspiracy to smear the Clintons. Whatever the truth of the criticism, it worked politically.

But this tactic cannot work against Danforth, because the Clinton administration itself selected him. Similarly, if Starr, frustrated by the administration's obstructionist tactics, had threatened to step down early on, the public would likely have blamed him as a quitter. If Danforth gets little help and threatens to quit, he has more political leverage precisely because he can say to the Clinton administration, "*You* picked me as the right man for this job; now let me do it my way."

AND, IF THE formal fact that Danforth answers to Reno and can be fired by her brings to mind the Saturday Night Massacre, remember that the massacre had a happy ending. Politically, Nixon paid dearly when he ordered the sacking of Archibald Cox, and his administration was forced to find another counsel who would be credible to its critics. Of course, if during the months ahead Danforth were somehow to squander the public's confidence, Reno might be able to fire or redirect him. But the ultimate referees of this game would be the press, the politicians, and the people, rather than a handful of unelected judges. And this is as it should be, given that the underlying issues are unlikely to be legal in a narrow sense; ordinarily politics, policy, personality, and partisanship would also be involved in conflicts between outside investigators and the administration. What's more, if the unilateral power of the executive branch to pull the plug on Danforth compromises the basic integrity and "independence" of his investigation, we must remember that, for virtually all the independent counsels under the 1978 law, the president retained this unilateral power. When President Bush pardoned Caspar Weinberger in 1992, Lawrence Walsh was left with no one to prosecute. The only investigation in which a president lacked this plug-pulling power was Starr's—since Clinton could not lawfully pardon himself.

All this should simply remind us of just how powerful the pardon power can be if it is wielded for dubious ends. Pardons can be given before the recipient has even been charged—as with Bush's pardon of Weinberger and President Ford's pardon of Nixon. And a skillful president can use the threat of pardon to affect an investigation, just as he can use the threat of veto to affect legislation. For example, Clinton is free to tell Danforth, publicly or privately, that he will pardon all involved if Danforth spends more than X dollars, takes more than Y months to do the investigation, or tries to scapegoat person Z.

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THE SWEEPING BREADTH and legal finality of the president's power under the Constitution's Article II, Section 2, to grant "Reprieves and Pardons" brings us to the latest battle over executive privilege, triggered by Clinton's recent decision to grant clemency to several convicted Puerto Rican terrorists. To critics of the Clintons, these pardons reek of New York politics, and both houses of Congress have opened investigations. But the administration has resisted oversight, claiming that Congress cannot subpoena internal executive deliberations about pardons. The conventional wisdom is that Clinton is—at last!—on firm legal ground. Because the president's pardon power is wholly within his discretion and utterly final, Congress has no proper legal role here.

This conventional wisdom, however, turns the Constitution upside down. In a constitutionally sensible regime, a claim of presidential privilege for good-faith conversations within the executive branch would be a very strong one indeed in an ordinary lawsuit brought by a single civil plaintiff, a state prosecutor, or a federal prosecutor. A single person lacking a national democratic mandate should not be allowed to pry into the intrabranch deliberations of the nation's president—and the conventional view to the contrary is merely the legacy of a series of not-very-thoughtful and rather self-aggrandizing judicial opinions over the past quarter-century. (See "The Unimperial Presidency," by Akhil Reed Amar, TNR, March 8.) But Congress has a much stronger claim for its right to pry, since it is both democratically accountable and specially tasked to watch over the executive branch. And, if Congress pushes too hard and comes up with too little, it will pay a price on Election Day—thus, its incentives to push just the right amount are far better than the incentives of private litigants, petty bureaucrats, or insulated judges.

Similarly, the argument that Congress has no proper role in investigating suspicious pardons or grants of clemency is constitutionally cockeyed. True, the Constitution vests the president and the president alone with the pardon power—but the same is true of the powers to veto laws, to appoint Cabinet officers, to command the Armed Forces, to negotiate treaties, and to do a great many other things. These other powers are not immune from congressional oversight; why should the pardon power be any different? In theory, any one of these powers might be used corruptly—for example, in exchange for a bribe.

And, even if a given pardon is utterly final, Congress surely has a legitimate role in assessing whether the Justice Department's general system for processing pardon requests needs revamping. (Congress, after all, foots the bill for this and all other executive departments.) Congress also has a legitimate role in deciding whether to propose a constitutional amendment limiting or abolishing the pardon power if it thinks the power is being abused. More generally, Congress has a legitimate role in helping publicize a bad pardon; one of the legislature's deepest and most traditional functions is to focus public attention on possible executive misconduct.

Finally, and most importantly, Congress may legitimately impeach and remove officials for the gross abuse or corrupt use of their lawful powers. After the Civil War, President Andrew Johnson pardoned vast numbers of Confederate leaders in the hopes of winning himself votes in the next election. And Congress impeached him, in part because of these promiscuous and politically inspired pardons of leaders who had conspired to kill and maim their countrymen. Of course, I am not urging another Clinton impeachment; we've been there and done that. But the right and power of impeachment gives the lie to those who say that Congress has no proper constitutional role here.

NONE OF THIS is to say, however, that the president must comply with any and all congressional subpoenas, no matter how burdensome or intrusive. Pardons often involve delicate and highly sensitive issues of personality, politics, and prudence alongside high principle; just as judges and legislators need some room for candid off-the-record discussions before final decisions are reached and publicly justified, so too does the executive branch. Thus each branch of the government is now properly playing its constitutionally assigned part—Congress is pushing to find out what happened, the president is resisting in order to shield confidential conversations, and the courts are happily out of the picture. Each political branch has powerful weapons at its disposal. Congress, in theory, can impeach the president for withholding relevant information—as a majority of the House Judiciary Committee voted to do in 1974 when Nixon defied certain House subpoenas. The president, for his part, can call Congress's bluff and appeal to the people if Congress seems to be pressing too hard and without strong bipartisan support.

Just how hard Congress should push will largely depend on how much the Clintons should be believed when they insist that the pardons were made on the basis of the good-faith consideration of relevant and proper factors. It will also depend on just how much congressional Republicans should be believed when they insist they are not out merely to scandalmonger and witch-hunt, thereby diverting attention from their own lack of a viable policy agenda.

But—and here's the key point—the respective credibility of the Clintons and their congressional critics are matters of political judgment wholly inappropriate for ordinary courtroom adjudication. If Congress wants to enforce the subpoena against a defiant Clinton, it should use its own judicial processes rather than go to Article III judges. Precisely because the Constitution gives Congress its own judicial powers here—via impeachment—ordinary judges should view the dispute as a quintessential "political question" over which they lack jurisdiction. (This is precisely the line the Supreme Court took during Andrew Johnson's presidency in a famous pair of cases, *Georgia* v. *Stanton* and *Mississippi* v. *Johnson*.)

In our era of deeply divided government, congressional oversight of the executive branch is likely to feature lots of posturing, pettiness, and partisanship. The system at work in the months ahead will probably not be pretty. But, in contrast to the one we had for the past 21 years, it will be both constitutionally sound and democratically accountable. ■

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Syria's next Assad.

Heir Apparent

By EYAL ZISSER

ON MARCH 11, Hafez al-Assad was sworn in for his fifth seven-year term as Syria's president. And, according to accounts in the Syrian press, he delivered his standard speech to the deputies of the Syrian parliament. The president rehearsed the familiar litany of Syria's woes—the economic crisis, the challenge of globalization, the various foreign threats, and so on—and then called for the use of every available resource to deal with them. But there was one very unusual thing about this swearing-in speech: Assad did not deliver it in person. Instead, he simply gave his deputies paper copies of his address and had them disseminate it to the rest of the nation via television, radio, and print media.

This was merely the most recent sign that we may be witnessing the twilight of Assad's reign. Abstaining from mass events and confining himself to his palace, the Syrian president has been an absentee leader for the better part of ten years, effecting a withdrawal from public life noteworthy even in this famously closed and secretive nation. And, while security concerns for Assad's life have something to do with his seclusion, it is now clear that Assad's long-standing health problems have taken their toll. The 69-year-old leader suffers from a heart condition, diabetes, and reportedly even leukemia, among other illnesses; on the few occasions on which he has appeared in public, he has been noticeably weak and fatigued. Western diplomats and officials who have met with Assad report similar impressions and say that he has lost some of his famous concentration.

So, as a round of serious peace discussions with Israel looms, the issue of political succession is also front and center in Syria, and it is far more complicated than most people, including Assad himself, would doubtless have preferred. For the first half of this decade, Assad meticulously groomed his eldest son, a charismatic and well-respected military commander named Basil, to assume control of the nation. Basil died five years ago in a car wreck, however, and it seems the devastated president has never gotten over the loss of his beloved would-be heir. (At Basil's funeral, Assad burst into tears and relied on physical support from his entourage throughout the ceremony.)

Assad has been more tentative with his second son and new designated heir, Bashar, a physician who accepted his political destiny with reluctance. The question now isn't so much whether Bashar will succeed his father, although that's not a sure thing. Rather, the question is just what kind of leader Bashar would be.

AS IN JORDAN, the changing of the guard will bring to power a new generation of leadership in Syria. And Bashar has gone out of his way to cultivate an image as a more cosmopolitan leader in touch with the information age. But there are reasons to question whether that image jibes with reality or whether, given the nature of Syria's government, that really even matters. So the future of Syria is very much in doubt—a fact that is just a bit unsettling, given the country's history of regional troublemaking, pulling the strings in Lebanon, and generally being a menace not only to Israel but also to its allies.

At the time of Basil's death, Bashar was in Britain completing his ophthalmology residency. He reportedly said later that he had never sought a life in politics, let alone dreamed of becoming president. But, under heavy pressure from his father, he agreed to return to Syria and resumed his place in the military. Promotion, unsurprisingly, was quick: a captain in 1994, Bashar became a major the following year and a lieutenant colonel in 1997. (Official Syrian sources attributed this accelerated pace of promotion to "Bashar's general excellence in the command and staff course and the exceptionally good final paper he presented in its framework.") Bashar was also appointed commander of a brigade in the Republican Guard division, the same position his late brother had held, and he began supervising the day-to-day activities of the entire army. Finally, in January, Bashar became a colonel, an even more visible perch from which he has sponsored a new generation of young commanders who will remain loyal to him should he become president.

During the same year, several of Bashar's would-be rivals for president fell from contention. In February 1998, Assad's brother Rifaat was ousted from the post of vice president for national security affairs, which he had held since 1984. Presumably, this occurred at Assad's behest, since the two men have had an openly hostile relationship for years. Then, in July, Assad forced Hikmat al-Shihabi, the Syrian army chief of staff for 24 years, into retirement. Ali Aslan, a career officer and a member of the Alawite sect and of Assad's own tribe, was appointed to replace him. In addition, toward the end of the year, Bashar took charge of Syria's involvement in Lebanon, pushing aside Vice President Abdul-Halim Khaddam, who in the past has been jokingly called the Syrian "high commissioner" in Lebanon.

Bashar has also begun bolstering his position as a statesman. He has gotten involved in the incipient peace process with Israel and has also tried to bring about an improvement in Syria's relationship with Jordan, developing friendly relations with that country's young king, Abdullah II. Bashar is just now completing a tour of the Arab world, including Saudi Arabia and the Gulf Emirates, and will likely head to North Africa and Iran soon.

EYAL ZISSER is a senior research fellow at the Moshe Dayan Center for Middle Eastern and African Studies and a lecturer on Middle Eastern and African history at Tel Aviv University.

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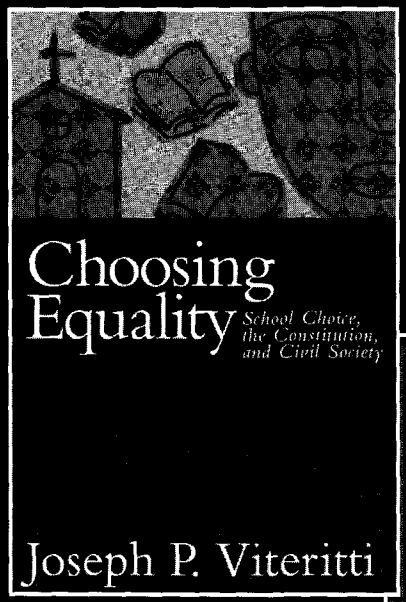

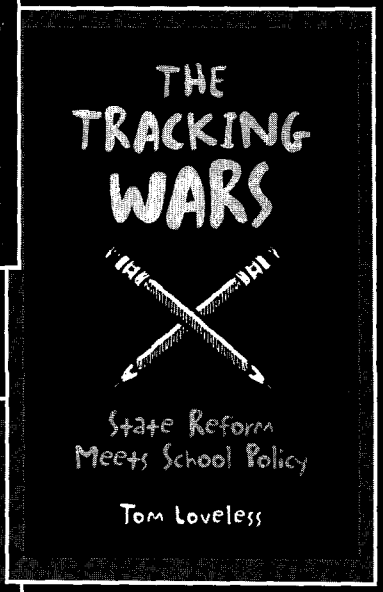

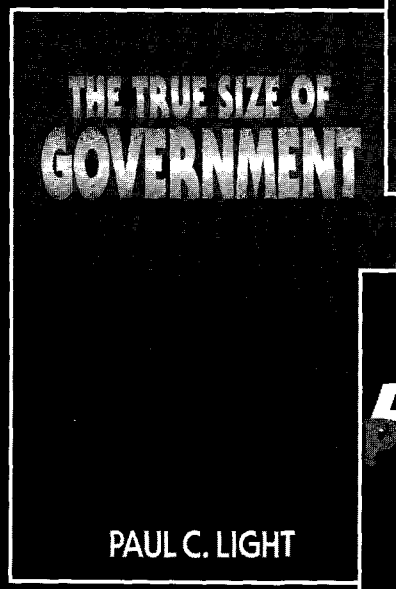

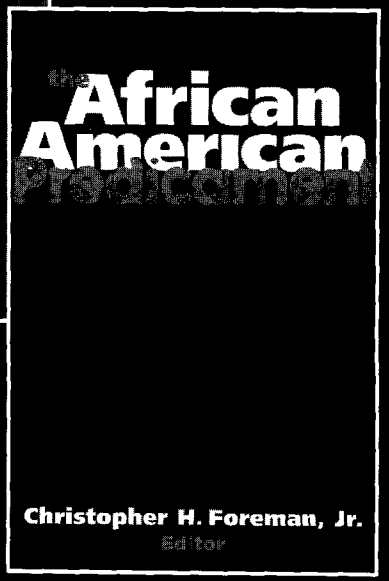

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NONETHELESS, BASHAR'S SUCCESSION is not a done deal. Assad has not yet given any public, unequivocal statement of his intention to appoint Bashar, perhaps because he believes that his son's training period has not yet ended—or perhaps because he feels that anointing Bashar would expose him to attacks from rivals before he is fully capable of fending them off. In an interview with French television in July 1998, for example, Assad did not dismiss the possibility that Bashar would succeed him, but he did not guarantee that it would happen, either.

Inside Syria, Bashar's candidacy at first invited a measure of skepticism, given his youth and inexperience in military and governmental affairs. Many also thought Bashar lacked the charisma, determination, decisiveness, and political savvy of his late brother. Still, those reservations have gradually subsided. His political and military resume has grown and will likely grow further during the next few years as he approaches 40, the minimum age the Syrian constitution requires for the presidency. And, if Assad can manage to hand over the presidency on his own terms and on his chosen timetable, that should solidify Bashar's hold on power.

But, if Assad does not live that long, Bashar's youth might embolden his rivals, particularly those who have their own reservoirs of support in the military and security forces. This would leave control of the government and the military bureaucracy in the hands of elderly leaders faithful to the old ideology of pan-Arabism mixed with Soviet-style socialism. With regional peace seemingly within grasp but with the Arab world still mired in state-engineered deprivation, that generation would find it hard to come to terms with the economic and diplomatic realities in which Syria finds itself, making the country's integration into global political and economic systems far more difficult.

BASHAR HAS CERTAINLY tried to appear open-minded and enlightened. He is chairman of the Syrian Computer Society, an organization that promotes awareness of information technology. In articles about his techno-savvy, of which there have been many in Syria's government-controlled press, he talks about surfing the Internet and about the need for Syrian society to catch up with worldwide developments in computer technology. Abdullah, who met Bashar on a visit to Damascus in April of this year, said, "Bashar is, like me, a man of the Internet generation." Bashar has also waged a rather public campaign against corruption in the Syrian government.

But this carefully cultivated public image is not necessarily an indication that Bashar would, indeed, pursue friendlier relations with Israel, take steps toward true democracy, or open his country to the West. Yes, he wants to bring the Internet to Syria. But, in a rare interview two years ago, he said this was necessary "so that not only one side [Israel] would have hegemony over that area." He went on to warn of the Internet's inherent danger: namely, that it "introduces the culture of foreigners into the Arab world" before it is prepared. Unlike Abdullah, Bashar is not the product of a Western educational system. He grew up in Syria. His education observed the basic precepts of the nationalist, pan-Arab, socialist ruling Baath party. And he has lived for most of his adult life in Syria. Although he spent many years in the West and has a proper understanding of the "Western spirit," deep inside he will remain a product of the land that nurtured him.

No matter who its leader is, the Syrian state and society can change only so much. Syria is deeply divided along ethnic and sectarian lines. Moreover, it is an economically and technologically backward society grappling with social and economic hardships. For Bashar to remain in power, he must enforce his father's heavy-handed policies and avoid upsetting the national culture. Assad's passing will end a chapter in Syrian history, but it's hard to imagine that the next one will be much different. ■

Overpopulation is no problem—in the long run.

Reproductivity

By GREGG EASTERBROOK

ONE OF THE oldest known works of literature, the ancient Babylonian epic poem *Atrahasis*, describes the anger of the gods about the fact that the Earth has grown too populous. At the time this work was composed, there were perhaps 50 million people worldwide. On October 12, the United Nations will declare that the global population has broken the six billion barrier—120 times the number that the gods of Babylonia saw as overpopulation. And don't get too comfortable with that new figure, because, at current rates of growth, the seven billion mark will be reached sometime around 2015, and then there will be 140 times more people than the ancients thought excessive.

Considering that the subject of population always brings out the ponderous in commentators and news anchors, the United Nations' Six Billion Day may help pundits set new records in areas such as the number of gravely intoned words uttered per newscast and the frequency of appearances of the adjective "staggering" in type. Environmental lobbyists, who have long viewed human reproduction with a kind of squeamish horror, will pronounce various kinds of impending doom. Against them will be posed the rising counterargument that a "birth dearth" is already in progress and that the population actually needs to grow more. Anyone encountering these contrapositive positions may become baffled—how can there be too many people and, at the same time, not enough?

It turns out that both propositions can be true, but for different places and time spans. Already, the birth rates of most Western nations have fallen below the "replacement rate" of 2.1 children per couple. The birth rate for the United States is currently two children per couple, and rates for the Euro-

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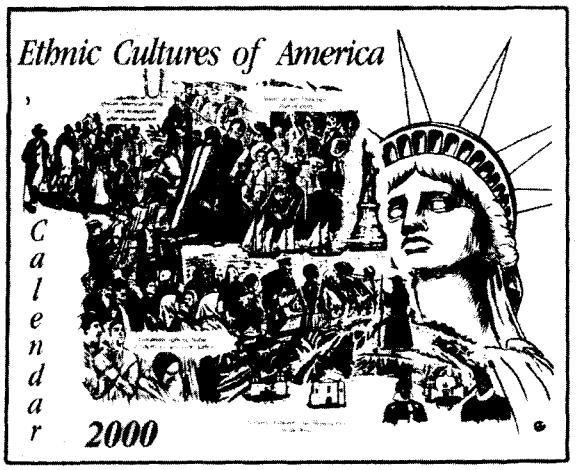

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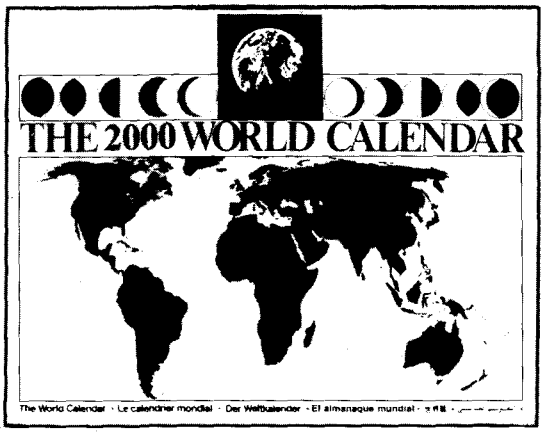

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pean states are lower still, with Italy, that most Catholic and most romantic of nations, down to 1.2—a rate that, on paper at least, means that Italy will be a theme park in a few generations. The U.S. population continues to expand because America accepts more legal immigrants annually than all other nations of the world combined. The Census Bureau projects that the U.S. population will increase from its present 270 million to nearly 400 million by 2050, with thanks for the increase due almost entirely to immigrants and their offspring. By contrast, Europe and Japan, which shun immigration, face graying futures, to say nothing of bankrupt pension systems, if their fertility rates continue to fall and their doors remain nailed shut to newcomers.

STEVE McCRACKEN

Eventual census decline may await other nations, too. Buried in the back of the same U.N. documents that warn of decades more of steep population growth are tables noting that, if global demographic trends already in existence continue worldwide, sometime during the twenty-second century the Earth's population will fall below its present number. This means that, deep into the next century, future subscribers to THE NEW REPUBLIC will be reading (or perhaps telepathically assimilating) earnest disquisitions on the need for global initiatives to encourage childbearing. It also means that the period of the population explosion, which is said by some to threaten nature itself, ultimately should total no more than a few hundred years, a much shorter time than naturally occurring environmental threats such as ice ages.

But, during the time horizon that matters to those reading this article today, global population growth and the social, environmental, economic, and military problems it causes may become the dominant issues of international politics. Absent nuclear war or a comet striking the planet, at least one more generation of increasing human population is a certainty. U.N. demographers give as their "most likely" scenario a world population increase to about nine billion around 2050. The jump from six billion to nine billion is the equivalent of the impact of adding 33 more Mexicos to the world. And 33 additional Mexicos is the appropriate metaphor, because essentially all of the projected increase will occur in developing nations, the very places that strain to accommodate those already present.

That the world population is bound to rise is no reason for alarm in itself. The postnatal cry is a beautiful sound; every human being alive today is glad to have been granted the privilege, and every human being to come deserves it just as fully. As Ben Wattenberg of the American Enterprise Institute points out, world population has trebled over the past 70 years without triggering any crash or collapse. If the final increase adds another third or half to the total, that may be manageable. But continuing population growth will bring a host of problems for which no nation is now prepared, including, perhaps, an artificial greenhouse effect, as an ever-larger developing world consumes more and more fossil fuel. And, though some additional population growth is cast in stone, the degree and speed of the growth are open to moderation. Yet, at the very time the world's population is breaking new barriers, the United States has chosen to back away from support for the international family-planning programs that moderate population growth, even though family-planning aid may be the most cost-effective form of foreign assistance ever devised.

The sheer velocity of population growth is, well, staggering. Today, a single nation—China—is home to more human beings than existed in the world when Thomas Jefferson was president. It took humanity the unknowable epoch from dawn in the Olduvai Gorge till about the year 1800 to reach one billion, and from 1800 till about 1925 to reach two billion; four billion more people have been added since Charles Lindbergh flew the Atlantic. At current rates, another billion people will join the human family every twelve years.

Population growth is not happening because women are having more babies. Throughout this century, childbearing has steadily decreased worldwide, from a global average of five children per woman in 1950 to 2.7 today. The "total fertility rate" of the developing world is trending downward, from 6.2 babies per woman in 1950 to three today, and still declining. What has caused population growth is the

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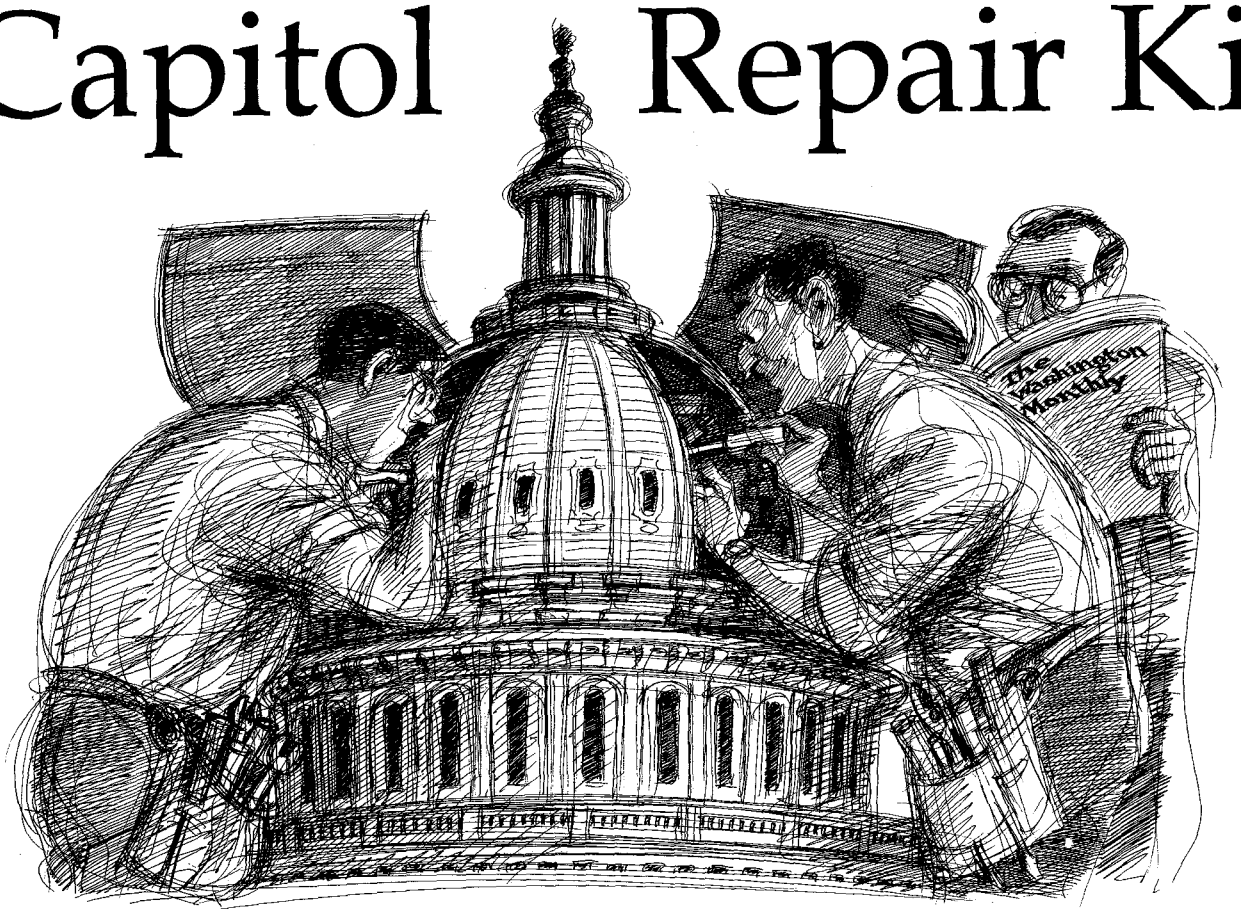

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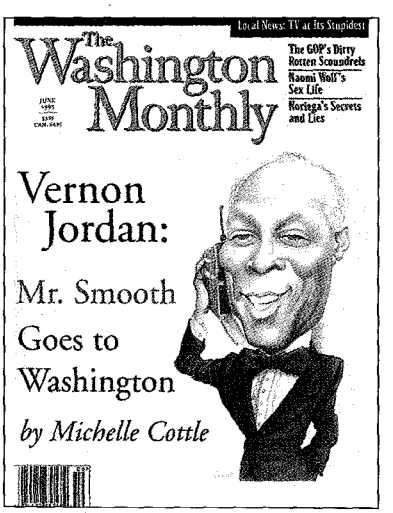
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incredible twentieth-century decline of death rates. Even taking into account this century's wars and genocides, overall longevity has risen in spectacular fashion in poor and rich nations alike, while infant mortality has seen a drastic world decline.

At the beginning of the century, the typical American life expectancy at birth was 47 years; now it's 76. Since 1970, life expectancy at birth has jumped from 55 to 64 years in the developing world, while infant mortality has declined by half. Antibiotics, vaccines, water-purification improvements, and the agricultural yields necessary for secure nutrition have been key factors in the decline of death rates. The late economist Julian Simon delighted in showing a chart of human life expectancy; the figure stayed level at an average of 30 years essentially from prehistory until the beginning of the twentieth century, when it blasted off like a moon rocket. Simon, who was denied his own 77 years, called greater life expectancy "the most important achievement in human history."

THE SPEED OF decline in global childbearing has come as a pleasant surprise. A few decades ago, many projections held that the world would include ten billion souls by now, a runaway figure that would surely have led to general misery. As recently as five years ago, the United Nations was projecting today's figure at 6.3 billion, rather than six billion. The alarmist view was that people in poor nations would endlessly have more babies because they didn't know any better. Declines in the rate of world population growth suggest instead that, as Nicholas Eberstadt has written, most couples everywhere make rational, responsible choices about childbearing.

When the developing world's economy centered on feudal agriculture and high death rates meant that a woman needed to bear ten babies in order to see five survive to work the fields, fertility was high. Now that education is becoming an essential part of contemporary economic success, while medical improvements increase the likelihood of childhood survival, couples all over the world are responding by having fewer offspring. At the same time, smaller family size has been shown, by a proliferation of studies and by the experience of the West, to relate closely to economic growth, rising education levels, and personal freedom, especially for women. Word is getting out: Villagers in developing nations may not be logging onto the Internet, but it is a serious mistake to consider them oblivious to the forces afoot in the world. Tellingly, developing-world fertility rates linger at the runaway level mainly in Africa, where public health is worst, education is least available, and economies are still largely subsistence-based.

But, even as the global childbearing average declines, population rises owing to "demographic momentum"—the continuing increase in the number of childbearing couples. Measuring by rate of growth, the population explosion peaked in the late '60s, when the human family increased by an average of two percent annually. Since then, the rate of growth has declined in a linear fashion and now stands at 1.4 percent annually. But the two percent growth in the late '60s added about 65 million people to the world annually, while the 1.4 percent growth of 1998 added 80 million—the compounding effect of a smaller rate spread across a larger base.

A RAND Corporation study estimates that, owing to demographic momentum, even if the reproduction rate of every country in the world magically transformed tomorrow into the replacement rate, population growth would continue for at least another 25 years, simply because a billion or so young people worldwide are just reaching childbearing age, and they represent the largest new-parent cohort ever. It should take roughly two generations for trend lines to cross and lower fertility to supplant larger numbers, replacing demographic momentum with inertia.

POPULATION IS SUCH a conflicted subject partly because it is wrapped up in pessimism theory. When, in the 1960s, the headlong growth of *Homo sapiens* became evident, commentators such as Paul Ehrlich and Garrett Hardin predicted an instant doomsday effect: continent-wide famines would kill billions, resource exhaustion would collapse the West, population-related ecological calamities would rage everywhere. The zeitgeist of population opinion became harshly anti-life, with some suggesting that it was wrong to supply modern pharmaceuticals to the developing world because they only served to keep people alive longer.

The notion that an expanding human population is intrinsically detrimental to nature has become deeply entrenched in green thinking, despite the fact that, by expanding their numbers, human beings are behaving quite naturally—occupying the maximum niche, in field biologists' terms. Today, it is common on the environmental left to hear population growth described in plague vocabulary or as "a cancer on the Earth." Recently, an epidemiologist named Warren Hern became a hit on the green conference circuit for asserting that satellite imagery of urban expansion resembles slides of cancer-cell growth, meaning population growth really is cancerous. Certain factions of environmentalism adore this kind of talk, but it's about as logical as saying that since nighttime satellite imagery of urban areas resembles Christmas lights, there really is a Santa Claus. And some on the hard right share the anti-population views of the green left for the ugly reason that the majority of those now being born are not white.

Theorists who believe that population growth is a horror are often obsessed with determining the "correct" number of human beings for the Earth. But population is neither good nor bad per se; it's all relative to what a society can support. Perhaps it was true, for instance, that the world of the ancient Babylonians was overpopulated relative to what the agriculture and society of the era could manage, even though dozens of times as many people dwell in the same region today at a higher living standard (one that might be better still were it not for the Mesopotamian tyranny of Saddam Hussein). Mayan society crashed in the ninth century, probably owing to resource exhaustion—at least, exhaustion of the resources that were important at the time. Today, many more people dwell on the old Mayan lands, and at a higher standard of living than the one that once caused a crash. Important nations

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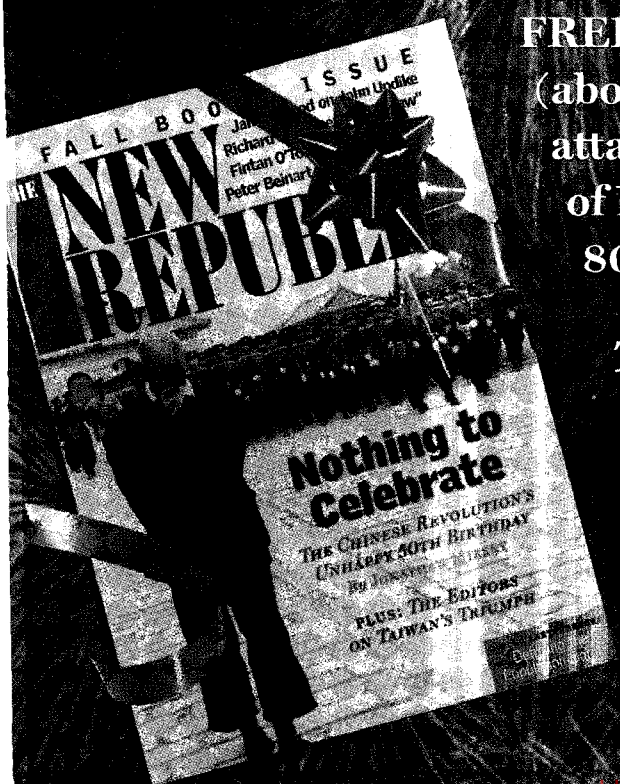

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such as China, India, and Pakistan are today overcrowded, based on what their societies and economies can support, and, in such places, the thought that even more mouths are on the way is sobering. But the core problem is the level of development of such nations, not their failures to have the "correct" number of people.

Anti-population theorists also contend that only sparse population is appropriate and sustainable, but no empirical evidence supports this contention. Countries such as the Netherlands have high population density and yet high living standards and high standards of environmental protection as well; sub-Saharan Africa is thinly populated and yet has low living standards and terrible environmental indicators. Hervé Le Bras, a French demographer, has plotted population against the U.N. human-development index and found no relationship between density and quality of life. Highly populous societies may or may not be desirable for the people who live in them. But, from the standpoint of nature and resources, there seems to be no reason in principle, assuming strong environmental regulation, why the Earth could not eventually host tens of billions of people without dystopia or ecological collapse.

As the Western nations have experienced population growth without problems much more serious than urban sprawl, the developing world has done surprisingly well, too, at least relative to expected calamities. Today, there are an astonishing 2.3 billion more people than there were in 1970, most living in developing nations, and yet, according to U.N. statistics, malnutrition has declined throughout this period; education, literacy, and standard of living have risen for most, though obviously not all, of the world's citizens. The West assumes itself to be the great postwar success story, but, relative to population growth, it may be that the developing world has recorded the most impressive and historically significant postwar achievement, absorbing billions of new people and yet, for the most part, improving.

To sustain the presently favorable trends in slower population growth, it is essential that the United States make a new commitment to support international family planning. Slower world-population growth did not happen merely through good intentions: medical services were required, too. "Fertility is declining faster than expected mainly because the percentage of the world that uses family planning has grown more rapidly than expected," says Bryant Robey, a demographer at Johns Hopkins University.

Consider Bangladesh. As recently as 1975, it was expected that, by the turn of the century, overpopulation would render Bangladesh the world's Calamity Central. Instead, the country's typical fertility fell from seven births per couple to 3.1 and continues to moderate, and, while Bangladesh has many problems, it's possible to be guardedly optimistic about the indicators in such areas as education and women's rights. To moderate Bangladeshi population growth, international organizations and the country itself made a commitment to spreading safe, modern family-planning services, which are now used by at least half of all Bangladeshis. Serious abuses have occurred in China and Peru, nations that have attacked population growth with forced abortions or sterilizations. But, as in Bangladesh, family planning has been a success story for most developing nations.

Important in this regard was the 1994 Cairo conference, which made zero impact on U.S. public opinion but has had extensive influence on the developing world. Prior to the Cairo conference, population thinking was stridently negative, shot through with environmentalist suggestions that animals are more important than people or with heartless bureaucratese—"cost per avoided child" was a phrase actually heard when planners discussed contraceptives. In this milieu, developing-world officials feared, with some justification, that population worries were just the latest guise of the presumed Western desire to keep the rest of the world down. At Cairo, the focus was on turning toward positive population thinking; emphasizing women's freedom; supporting voluntary, democratic programs; and, most of all, reinforcing the idea that smaller family size promotes education and economic success. Post-Cairo, many developing nations are shifting to the Western model of medically safe, voluntary family planning. There is even some movement in this direction in China, where government officials professed that they were surprised by research showing that reproductive freedom aids economic growth, and are gradually embracing the idea.

Unfortunately, the United States, traditionally the world's leader in supporting international family planning, has been backing away from the cause. Studies show that there are between 350 million and 400 million couples in impoverished nations who want family-planning services and cannot obtain them. A high percentage of these couples reside in Africa, where there is both a humanitarian and a U.S. national interest in taking the kinds of steps, including population-growth moderation, that will improve public health, promote development, and raise education levels. But, today, the United States grants only $385 million a year to international family-planning services, a 30 percent reduction from previous levels when inflation and population growth are taken into account.

For a decade, U.S. assistance for international family planning has been bogged down politically by the misconception that providing family-planning aid means supporting abortion. Yet federal law already bars the use of U.S. aid for abortions, and nothing helps reduce global demand for abortion more than contraception. Now there is the possibility that family-planning aid will become bogged down in a different misconception: that population dynamics no longer matter.

Eventually, population growth will end, and, when it does, the world will likely be in better shape than the alarmists ever expected. But one or two more generations stand between here and there. They can be happier, more humane generations with modest investments in family-planning assistance. It would cost the typical taxpayer less than $3 per year to double U.S. family-planning support—far less than the likely price in treasure and blood if there were a war caused by overpopulation in which the United States had to intervene. ■

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China's wasted half-century.

Nothing to Celebrate

By JONATHAN MIRSKY

"A REVOLUTION IS not a dinner party.... [I]t is an act of violence by which one class overthrows another." During the 1960s, when the quotations of Chairman Mao enjoyed a certain vogue and many "progressives" in the West owned personal copies of Mao's "Little Red Book," this 1927 aphorism was a favorite. Few considered the word "violence"; if they did, they might have felt a frisson of vicarious excitement.

Today, with the Communist authorities in China about to stage a huge celebration in honor of the fiftieth anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China—a revolution whose origins lie in the founding of the Chinese Communist Party almost 80 years ago—we have no excuse for failing to grasp the full significance of Mao Zedong's words. Having read a mélange of Marxist texts, the young Mao could toss around words such as rich, middle, and poor peasants; national bourgeoisie; and big and middle landlords; and, in a godlike way, he could pronounce that some would survive and others would be "overthrown." But what Mao actually meant by "class" was a sort, a kind, a category, with no Leninist attributions. He meant his enemies. And, since this category could, as it happened, include almost anyone, the "act of violence" Mao proposed would prove to be a more or less endless series of violent acts—going back to well before that fabled day, October 1, 1949, when he came to Tiananmen Square and declared that "the Chinese people have stood up."

From the purges that began even before Mao arrived at his mountain redoubt at Yenan, to the tragedy of the Cultural Revolution, the process of political transformation Mao and his comrades set in motion is a long story of intentional crimes and disastrous ideologically driven policy mistakes. Liquidation, survival, sometimes rehabilitation, more liquidation: This is the historical rhythm of the revolution Mao's heirs invite us to commemorate today.

Should we join in the celebration nonetheless? Many in the West seem prepared to answer at least a qualified yes. From academia comes the verdict of historian Maurice Meisner of the University of Wisconsin, who, in a recent lecture in London, justified the Chinese Revolution on the grounds of historical necessity. Meisner maintains that the Chinese Revolution did more for "people than any other single political event in world history." He concedes that the revolution was accompanied by "horrors and crimes," including the gulag, purges, famine, and "the denial of basic rights of free expression and association." But, given the corruption of Chiang Kai-shek, the brutality of Japanese occupation and the effectiveness of Mao's army in combating it, and the seemingly incurable chaos and stagnation that had enveloped China after the fall of the Manchu dynasty in 1911, there "was no real alternative" to this "most heroic of revolutions." What has happened in China, Meisner contends, already is plainly "the most massive and most popular revolution in world history."

To be sure, Meisner is an old enthusiast of left-wing revolutions, although many respectable sinologists of every ideological stripe have shared his basic verdict for years. Yet the celebratory mood runs strong even—or perhaps especially—among the top ranks of American capitalism. Here the excitement stems not so much from an evaluation of China's history but rather from an assessment of its future—as a huge market. China's modernization under communism, especially the last 20 years of rapid growth under a more market-oriented party leadership, also impresses the world's giant corporations. Thus, *Fortune* magazine will sponsor a "Global Forum" at the end of this month titled "China: The Next 50 Years." The three-day event, to be opened with an address from President Jiang Zemin himself, will be held in Shanghai, which *Fortune* describes as "one of the world's most dynamic emerging centers of commerce." Only CEOs of "major multinational companies" are to be invited, including China booster Philip Condit of Boeing, who made headlines in 1997 by comparing China's human rights problems with America's.

It was Mao's faithful acolyte Zhou Enlai who once said that it was still too early to tell the historical significance of the French Revolution. In this sense, China's rulers and their friends around the world seem to be rushing to judgment. For there is another view of what this fiftieth anniversary is really about, a view of China's revolution that regards the awful human suffering that accompanied it as neither historically determined nor justified by the undeniable economic improvements of the past two decades, advances that have been accompanied by some loosening of the once-total grip the Communist Party maintained over every facet of daily life in China.

No one can say where China would be today if the Communists had not taken over. Perhaps its economic stagnation and political chaos would have deepened. Perhaps it would have slowly developed into a modern, democratic capitalist state like South Korea or Taiwan. Or perhaps the best verdict is that China's revolution was a human catastrophe of unequalled scope—a colossal political, economic, and moral

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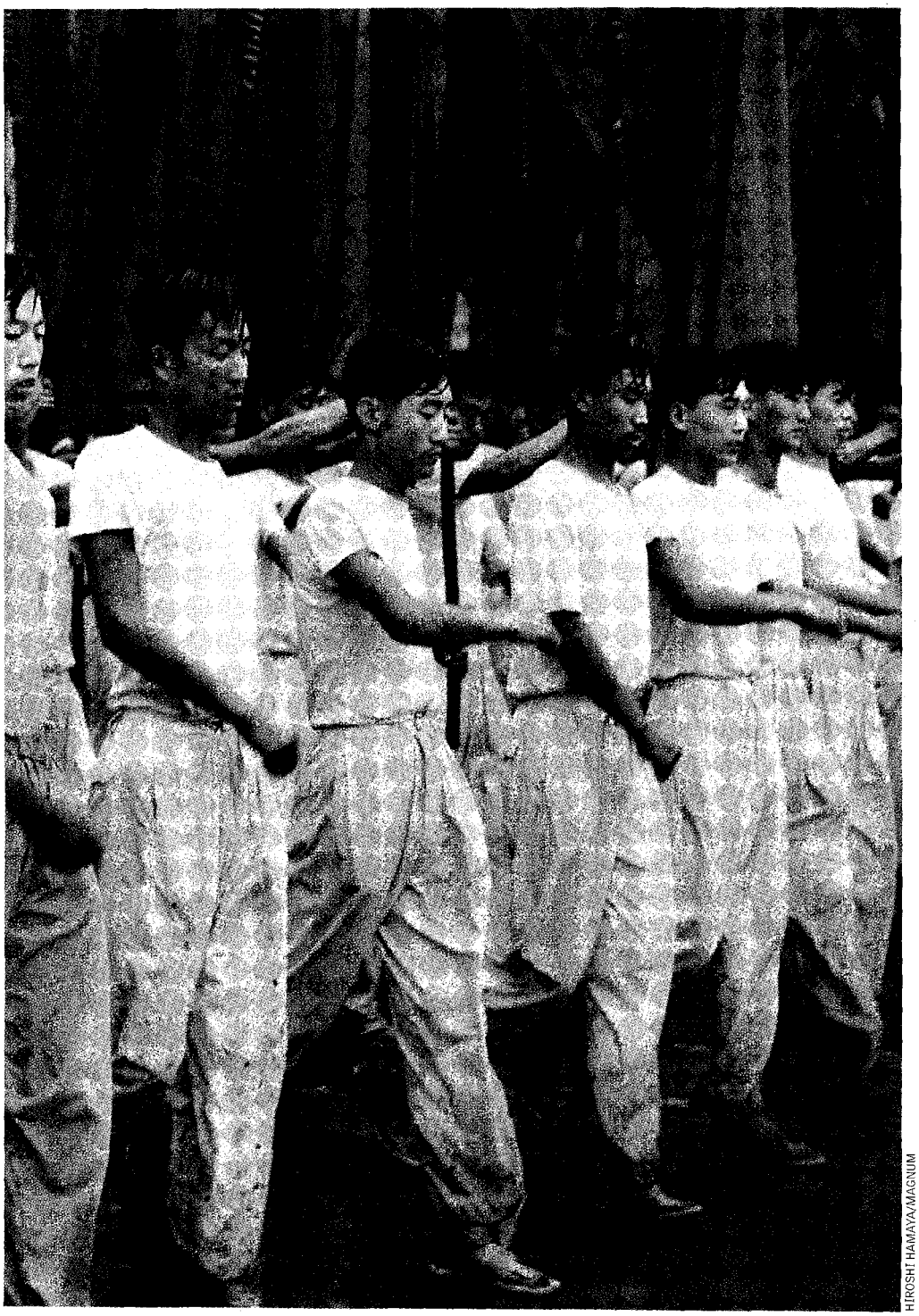
setback from which the society is still recovering. It is, moreover, a recovery to which the Chinese Communist Party, for all the positive developments of the past 20 years, is still an obstacle.

Any view that Mao's depredations were necessitated by the war with Chiang, the Japanese occupation, China's sheer backwardness and disorder, or, perhaps, the later hostility of Russia and the United States cannot be squared with a simple fact: the party's ugliest and most systematic violence was always reserved for those within its own ranks, and this internecine cruelty began too early to allow it to be chalked up to outside pressures or political necessity. What Harvard University's Roderick MacFarquhar calls "the mark of Cain" stained the party as early as 1930, 19 years before Mao came to power, when Mao's infant Red Army crushed a rival provincial Communist force known as the AB Corps. The party accused the corps of being counterrevolutionary and executed hundreds of its members.

At the center of this struggle was an "incident" in a town called Futian. The leading scholar of the purge, Stephen Averill, says, "There is no reason whatsoever to think there was ever an elaborate multi-tiered secret AB Corps network plotting the destruction of the revolution," as Mao had alleged. Averill quotes Xiao Ke, one of the party's earliest military leaders: "We comrades who participated in this movement, regardless of whether we were executors or victims, all remember ... that aside from oral confessions there was really no evidence to prove the existence of [the AB Corps]. Today, fifty years later ... we still cannot find any concrete evidence proving the existence of [the AB Corps] in the Soviet areas at that time."



HIROSHI HAMAYA/MAGNUM

Beijing, China, 1956

Futian foreshadowed the killings at Yenan, the mountain province to which Mao dragged the tired and purged remnants of his party after the Long March of 1934–1935. For the eleven years from 1936 until 1947, the headquarters at Yenan became a scene of periodic and bloody internal killing. For their invaluable book, *Revolutionary Discourse in Mao's Republic*, David Apter of Yale and Tony Saich, now at Harvard, interviewed 150 veterans of Yenan: peasants, workers, soldiers, teachers, writers, underground workers, one of Mao's secretaries, and Mao's photographers, together with "some very angry widows, survivors of those whose faction, or unit, had been on the losing side in the internal struggles for power within the [party]." Apter and Saich note: "Very few of those interviewed had been exempt from physical abuse and verbal assault ... all had survived by learning how to keep their mouths shut,

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except to parrot the appropriate line and use the exact words, phrases, and expressions countenanced by the authorities."

Apter and Saich point out that Mao engaged in four key contests for power at Yenan. "Each of the four struggles ended in the death or exile of Mao's designated opponent. In each case his victory was complete.... By demolishing anyone who dared to challenge him ... Mao was able to position himself not only as a locus of power within the party, but also as a source of power in and of himself...." The leading specialist in China on the Yenan purges is the scientist and journalist Dai Qing, who has written of the beheading, drowning, and burying alive of "Trotskyists." This was the place where Edgar Snow discovered an inspirational "red star over China" and where Foreign Service Officer John S. Service, who was stationed there for some months, found "a YMCA camp." Service told me years later that he had subsequently learned of the killing, but that even if he had known about it at the time he would have ignored it, since, in his mind, everything had to be subordinated to beating the Japanese.

ONCE IN POWER, the Chinese Communist Party continued its destructive work. Beginning in the late 1950s, having already driven the Dalai Lama into his Indian exile, Beijing set about dismantling Buddhism's works and clergy, which are the core and the rationale of Tibetan life. The Communist Chinese takeover of Tibet was an act of crude nationalistic conquest admitting of no defensible explanation in terms of Beijing's political or economic self-interest. It changed the traditionally self-sufficient economy of the region so that for at least 15 years there was mass famine. This policy has been compounded by the transplanting of tens of thousands of Chinese into Tibet, where the native people are in danger of becoming a minority. The notion that, by clinging to their unique civilization, the Tibetans are "interfering with politics and education" is the justification for the enormities that have kept the jails of Tibet well-stocked with Buddhist nuns and priests.

We know from the seminal study *Chinese Village, Socialist State*, by Edward Friedman, Mark Selden, and Paul Pickowicz, that, even before it took power in Beijing, the party encouraged local thugs to kill its targets and in "model villages" advanced policies that it knew were catastrophic but could not admit had failed. Hundreds of thousands of landlords—rich and not so rich—were killed in the early '50s after the Maoist victory. Perhaps a half-million people were purged during the two-year anti-rightist drive that began in 1957. Many died—either through murder or inhuman treatment—in labor camps. All of this set the stage for the largest famine in human history, known as the Three Terrible Years, which lasted from 1959 to 1961.

In the third volume of his masterful *The Origins of the Cultural Revolution*, MacFarquhar writes that, in 1959 and 1960, in a single county—Fengyang in Anhui province—60,245 people, 17.7 percent of the population, died. In some communes, between 20 and 30 percent of the population perished. Conditions were so grim in one place, according to MacFarquhar, "that a scholar of ancient Chinese history compared this village to a neolithic site...." In a normal year, 250,000 people died in Anhui. In 1960, 2,200,000 died of hunger there. In Sichuan province, China's most populous, the population sank from 70,810,000 to 64,591,800 between 1957 and 1961. During the same period, at least 13 provinces recorded negative population growth. In Beijing, the annual number of deaths rose from 320,000 in 1957 to 790,000 in 1961, the year in which Snow, who was visiting China, poured scorn on those who claimed Chinese were starving. MacFarquhar quotes estimates that 30 million died. China's leading investigative journalist, Liu Binyan, says that, in party circles at the time, the figure was believed to be 50 million.

During the Cultural Revolution, which ran from 1966 to 1976, millions are reported to have died, again either murdered or allowed to perish in confinement. The horrors of the Cultural Revolution were legion. Twenty years ago in Beijing, I watched the televised Gang of Four trial, at which witness after witness described torture and execution. Many of the interrogations had been recorded on tape so that Madame Mao could listen to them at her convenience. She defended her actions to the judges, saying, "I was just Chairman Mao's lapdog. Whom he said I should bite, I bit." Zhou Enlai, supposed by some to have protected potential victims during these years, in fact chaired a committee that oversaw the harsh treatment of Mao's specially selected victims, meticulously carrying out his wishes. Two years ago, I heard a Chinese scholar now at the University of California at Berkeley describe the dozens of schools that had been seized by Red Guards and Maoist "work teams," where the killing of teachers was frequent and where no one who witnessed the violence could recall a single dissenting voice raised in the victims' defense.

AND WHAT OF China's official efforts truthfully to assess these horrendous deeds and the question of who bears the responsibility for them? In June 1981, five years after Mao's death, the party, now in the hands of Deng Xiaoping and his colleagues, published an account of its own history since its founding. This extraordinary 32-page document was edited carefully by Deng himself. It starts off on a dishonest note, praising the pre-1949 years of the insurrectionist party. Indeed, the Deng-edited document obfuscates the very origins of the party, claiming almost 60 members founded it in 1921. The party was actually founded in 1920 by two or three revolutionaries who were cast out in the early years; it became necessary for party historians to record that the founding took place in 1921, when Mao was present. The report describes Mao's first great purge of intellectuals, at Yenan in 1942, as "a tremendous success," although it set the stage for intellectual purges to this day.

The candor begins, barely, with an account of 1956 in which the document concedes that after "the socialist transformation of the private ownership of the means of production ... there had been shortcomings and errors.... [W]e were far from meticulous, the changes were too fast...." This refers to the establishment of the agricultural coopera-

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tives, forerunners to the disastrous communes of 1958, which were a key factor in the subsequent famines and a "shortcoming" not reversed until the late '70s. Regarding the anti-rightist campaign, launched in 1957 after Mao determined that the Hundred Flowers period—when intellectuals were encouraged to criticize the leadership—had gone too far, Deng's history has this to say: "A handful of bourgeois Rightists seized the opportunity to advocate what they called 'speaking out and airing views in a big way,' and to mount a wild attack against the Party.... It was therefore entirely correct and necessary to launch a resolute counterattack. But the scope of this struggle was far too broad and a number of intellectuals, patriotic people, and Party cadres were unjustifiably labeled 'Rightists,' with unfortunate consequences." This dainty phrase refers to the vast purging of an estimated 500,000 people, including the current premier, Zhu Rongji—many of whom were detained until well after the Cultural Revolution ended in 1976.

THE DOCUMENT THEN turns to the years 1958–1960, known as the Great Leap Forward ("mistakes of enlarging the scope of class struggle and of impetuosity and rashness in economic construction"), a period marked by "arbitrary directions, boastfulness, and the stirring up of a 'communist wind'.... Comrade Mao Zedong and many leading comrades both at the center and in the localities ... overestimated the role of man's subjective will and efforts." The document admits that the charges drawn up against old revolutionary comrades who dared to criticize Mao "were entirely wrong." Yet there is no mention of the tens of millions who perished of hunger during those years. To this day, that disaster is barely mentioned. When it is, it is understated, and the Soviet Union is blamed for cutting off economic aid.

Creeping towards "the comprehensive, long-drawn-out, and grave blunder"—the Cultural Revolution—the document admits that, during the early '60s, "'Left' errors ... actually grew in the spheres of politics, ideology, and politics." Between 1964 and 1965, "a number of the cadres at grass-roots levels were unjustly dealt with...." (There are no details about how they were "dealt with.") The account of the Cultural Revolution fills seven pages, summed up with the following: "The 'cultural revolution' which lasted from May 1966 to October 1976 was responsible for the most severe setback and the heaviest losses suffered by the Party, the state, and the people since the founding of the People's Republic. It was initiated and led by Comrade Mao Zedong." The document adds, "Comrade Mao Zedong must be held chiefly responsible.... [H]is personal arbitrariness gradually undermined democratic centralism in Party life and the personality cult grew graver and graver."

Yet, even here, there is a crucial weasel phrase. Having derided the major ideas of the decade, the document says that "these theses must be thoroughly distinguished from Mao Zedong Thought." Mao—but not his "Thought"—was responsible, the document admits, for errors long before 1966. But they were the errors "of a great proletarian revolutionary.... Herein lies his tragedy.... His merits are primary and his errors secondary." As for the party itself: "Without the Chinese Communist Party there would have been no new China.... [I]t can correct its mistakes and in no case should one use the Party's mistakes as a pretext for weakening, breaking away from or even sabotaging its leadership."

Even if some of Communist China's foreign apologists can posit a radical discontinuity between the awful past and the promising present, China's own leaders know better. They know that a completely candid assessment of their performance would have to go right back to the origins of the party and would implicate Mao personally in campaign after campaign of mass murder and devastating policy errors. And, if Mao is to blame, then the party he built is to blame; and if the party is to blame, then those who inherited its revolutionary mantle have no legitimate claim to rule.

This would have been too much for Deng to admit. After all, he personally oversaw the purge of intellectuals during the Great Leap Forward (the 1981 report characterizes the purge as necessary but overzealous) and was a senior official throughout the major killing campaigns after 1949; he was also the commissar of the armies that invaded Tibet in 1950. Deng climbed the ladder through the bureaucracy during all those years and cannot question them. It is an irony that Premier Zhu, himself a victim of the anti-rightist campaign (the only such significant leader today), never condemns the Maoist years of oppression. He has, indeed, been rehabilitated.

In short, Mao's trivial "Thought" and his actual record of governance, ghastly as it is, are all China's current rulers have in the way of a claim to legitimacy. Little wonder, then, that Vice President Hu Jintao, a member of the party's powerful Politburo, recently told students at the party school: "Party leaders at all levels should improve their study of Marxism, Leninism, Mao Zedong Thought, and particularly Deng Xiaoping theory, so as to sharpen their political consciousness."

In the years since 1976, when Mao died, the wholesale, chaotic bloodletting has more or less ceased. Also, the nature of official violence has changed. The violence of Mao's era was, indeed, revolutionary: first, it was intended to destroy any traditional sources of power that might threaten Mao or his immediate circle of the moment; second, it was intended to extinguish any potential source of opposition to Mao within the party. By contrast, post-Mao official violence has had a more controlled, conservative cast. Tiananmen, including the thousands tortured and executed around the country in the ensuing *qingcha*, or ferreting-out, was a classic act of repression by an established, now threatened, elite. Last year in Beijing, Jiang told President Clinton, "With regard to the political disturbances in 1989, had the Chinese government not taken the resolute measures then, we could not have enjoyed the stability we are enjoying today."

Order, then, is the party elite's post-Tiananmen claim to power. Order, prosperity, and national power. And, without question, China—a member of the U.N. Security Council whose views must be taken into account on issues from Kosovo to East Timor—has emerged as a player on the world stage. But the prosperity upon which China's newfound international salience is based is more precarious than the

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country's boosters like to admit. In Shanghai, the site of the *Fortune* conference, 70 percent of all office space is vacant. The city is also a center for China's four main banks, nearly half of whose total loan portfolio—worth one trillion dollars—is not recoverable. Nonetheless, last year these insolvent banks were ordered by the government to lend the staggering state-owned industries $12 billion more, although, according to Moody's Investors Service, it would cost $120 billion to clear the banks' debts. That is at least twelve percent of China's gross domestic product. The party cannot deal with a restive mass of 150 million rural unemployed and millions more jobless industrial workers.

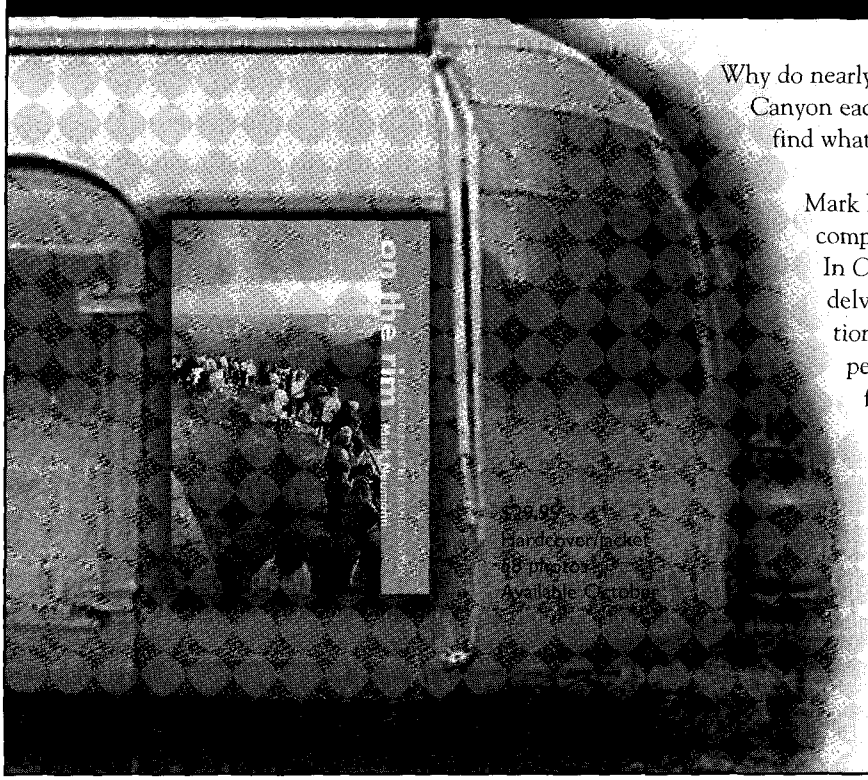
Nor will the party provide the rule of law promised by China's own constitution. Corruption, the catalytic grievance of many of the pro-democracy demonstrators at Tiananmen, remains as powerful and suffocating a force as ever. According to official figures cited in a recent Associated Press story, some $14.2 billion in government money was misused during the first half of 1999, the equivalent of one-fifth of total central government revenue last year. The AP reports that "the Ministry of Water Resources, in charge of preventing floods, illegally collected money to build luxury office buildings and also embezzled funds for other uses.... Annual summer floods last year killed 4,150 people."

Perhaps even worse than the party's corruption is the fact that the Communists are presiding over a social scene marked by untrammeled abuse and neglect. The most damning charge in a recent 102-page report by Human Rights in China, a New York-based human rights research organization, is that China's one-child family policy has collided with a cultural preference for boys, resulting in 500,000 "missing" girls per year, five percent of the total expected if all infant girls were allowed to survive. After almost 20 years of such a horrific shortfall, we are left with Amartya Sen's question: Where are the more than 50 million missing Chinese females? A Human Rights Watch report on Chinese orphanages, in which many girls are regularly allowed to die, states that China "conceals a secret world of starvation, disease, and unnatural death—a world into which thousands of Chinese citizens disappear each year.... The victims are not... political and religious dissidents... they are orphans and abandoned children in custodial institutions run by China's Ministry of Civil Affairs."

And yet China's boosters remain undaunted. A well-known historian of China recently told me, "You can discuss almost anything with intellectuals in Beijing these days." Some optimists say, too, that China is not really Communist or socialist anymore and that the profit motive has taken the place of ideology. These friends of the post-revolutionary era become uncomfortable or even angry when less-friendly China-watchers comment on the criminalization of millions of Christians and Buddhists who are not under the "patriotic church" umbrellas of the party, not to mention the treatment meted out to "superstitions" such as the innocuous Falun Gong movement.

Seth Faison, *The New York Times'* respected Beijing corre-

ON THE RIM
Looking for the Grand Canyon
by Mark Neumann



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spondent, recently wrote of "how permissible unconventional styles of life are becoming here." His case study? The rise of Jin Xing, a former colonel in the army and a nationally acclaimed dancer. Ex-colonel Jin is now Ms. Jin, China's first out-of-the-closet transsexual. She has the approval of the official media, and her autograph is widely sought. "I like being famous," Jin says.

But, for every peripheral story like the acceptance of Jin, there are countless other instances in which the Chinese government has not been so tolerant. Consider Liu Baiqiang, who a few years ago received an extra eight years in prison—on top of his original ten for robbery—for the "heinous" crime (the official judgment) of attaching leaflets reading "Long Live Freedom," "Deng Xiaoping Step Down," and "Tyranny" to the legs of locusts and launching them from his cell. Or Zhang Shanguang, who is serving ten years for "giving intelligence to institutions outside the borders." What did this archcriminal do? He gave information to a foreign journalist about a demonstration by farmers and workers in Hunan. Even worse, he organized the Association to Protect the Rights and Interests of Laid-off Workers in Xupu County.

Then there's Gendun Choekyi Nyima, who has simply disappeared. In 1995, at age six, he was identified by the Dalai Lama as the eleventh incarnation of the Panchen Lama, Tibet's second-ranking religious figure. The Tenth Panchen, who had been persecuted much of his adult life by the Chinese, died under suspicious circumstances in 1989. No sooner had the Dalai Lama—unwisely, he now concedes—declared his choice for the Eleventh Panchen in May 1995 than the child, his parents, and the abbot who had secretly told the Dalai Lama about the boy all disappeared. Beijing then produced its own rival incarnation, who almost at once, in an audience with Jiang, pledged his loyalty to the Communist Party and to socialism.

THE CHINESE STATE has just issued 50 anniversary slogans. Number 34 runs: "Improve the Party's work style, build a clean government, and serve the people heart and soul!" In that spirit, the party is linking the revolution's birthday with yet another purge, this one built around the notion of "three stresses"—study of Mao and Deng, political awareness, and good conduct. Less violent and chaotic than the old-fashioned anti-rightist campaign or the Cultural Revolution, the latest campaign of internal party discipline will nevertheless attempt to root out false beliefs such as Falun Gong (reportedly rampant in party ranks) and generally remind the party's 61 million members who's boss. As Geremie Barme, an Australian China scholar, told the AP: "This is the way the party conducts its business, and it does result in a response. People know to shut up, to pull their heads in, to be careful, to play it safe."

A few years ago, in the midst of a similar effort, the party's newspaper, the *People's Daily*, issued the following directive: "Do not lose sight of the party's purpose." This was actually a warning. The party's purpose is obvious—stay in power by any and all means. In other words, as the University of Wisconsin's Meisner might say, there is no real alternative. ■

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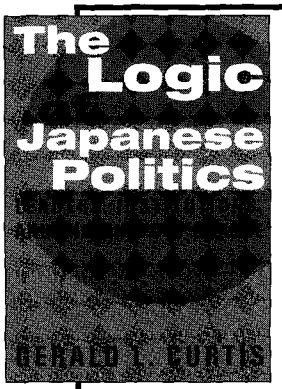

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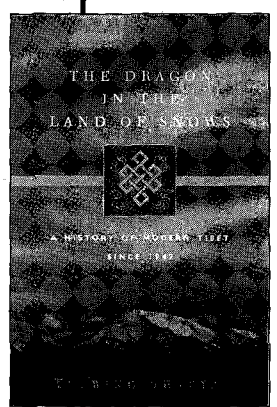

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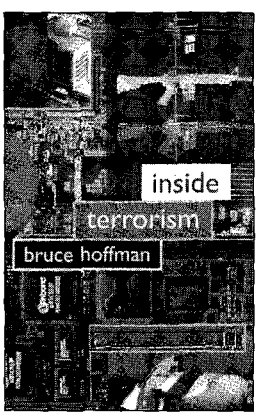

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Stanley Kauffmann on Films

In Search of an Author

SIX CHARACTERS ARE again searching for an author—not Pirandello's people but Alan Ball's. These six are in **American Beauty** (DreamWorks), which was written by Ball, and if they are not startlingly original or deep people, they are vivid, principally because the actors who portray them are so strong. But at the finish of the picture, we're left feeling that Ball has had a trial run with them: now he needs to go back and really use them to some enlightening and organically whole purpose.

The title (like that of the French film *Romance*) is a declaration: it blazons that this is the one thing the film is not going to be about. Ball wastes no time in keeping this promise. The film starts with an aerial view of neat suburban streets, and as the camera moves in, a man's voice tells us that his name is Lester Burnham and that this is his neighborhood. Then he says: "In less than a year I'll be dead. Of course I don't know that yet. In a way I'm dead already."

If we resist an urge to reach for our coats and leave—after this double whammy of facile metaphysics and a prediction of moribund suburban life—*American Beauty* compensates us in some ways, but it never justifies the blatancy of its opening, and it never does anything to freshen what is only one more journey through familiar fortyish unfulfillment. Lester is a journalist (living, as do so many film persons, in a home and style beyond his apparent means) who feels his existence slipping through his fingers. His wife Carolyn has more passion for developing her real estate business than for the man who lies next to her at night. Their daughter Jane, a high schooler, hates them both for the usual adolescent reason: she thinks she's a woman and they think she's a child.

Thus each is tagged, and each is ready for trouble. For Lester, it's the sexy blonde high-school chum of his daughter. For Carolyn, it's Buddy Kane, the handsome real estate honcho of the area. For Jane, it's the boy who just moved in next door. This boy, Ricky Fitts, is the one real surprise in the picture: he is the son of a Marine colonel and, in his introspective way, has found a way of dealing with his two-fisted father that leaves him free to follow his own quirks. His mother has been erased almost into catatonia by the father, but Ricky is quietly surviving.

This supposedly realistic film has more than its share of arrant mechanics. If a middle-aged journalist of some success gets fired, would he then insist on getting a job as a cook in a hamburger joint? Just to flaunt his freedom? Would Buddy Kane, a skillful smoothie, snuggle with another man's wife in a public place? Just because the plot needs the affair to be discovered? Would Lester proceed toward sex with the young blonde on the sofa in his living room—with his daughter upstairs and his wife liable to come home?

Yet these coarsely stitched seams might pass if the stories of all these people moved to some enlightenment or if some new light were shed on old subjects. But all that Ball can tell us is what many American and British and French and Italian films have already expounded. Modern urban-suburban life can be anesthetic; the human spirit often chafes against dehumanizing limits and either explodes or shrivels. Ball has nothing to add.

What's worse, he burdened his script with that zingy opening which he then had to justify. But Lester's death at the end is no kind of summation of what the film is about. It's merely a maniacal affront, irrelevant to what Lester has been through in the story. Worse still, his opening lines and the symmetrical post-mortem voice-over make Lester a spirit hovering over his mundane life, with no hint as to why this particular suburbanite has been elevated to an all-seeing view. Except, of course, that the opening and closing were thought to give the film "stature."

The actors deserve better. Lester is Kevin Spacey, who is becoming the new Gene Hackman—a man of ordinary appearance and effect, gifted in a way that makes his ordinariness an asset, an apotheosis of the contemporary. Peter Gallagher, who in contrast has exceptional good looks, struggles with that burden to make Buddy Kane comprehensible, if not appealing. Thora Birch is pathetic and irritating as Jane, and Wes Bentley finds odd mental corners in the loony boyfriend. As his father, Chris Cooper takes good care of the role. Mena Suvari is sufficiently succulent as the quasi-innocent blonde menace.

The really memorable acting comes from Annette Bening as Carolyn. Energized, deep-breathing, wonderfully precise, Bening makes Carolyn flare through the picture. Bening was trained for the theater, and the press notes tell us that she has lately played Hedda Gabler in Los Angeles; her work here makes me regret that I missed her Hedda. Her past films, especially *The American President* and *Bugsy*, showed how incisive her acting can be. This new film suggests that she may be one of the few film women since Bette Davis to have an *acting* career as she ages.

The director is Sam Mendes, the Englishman who quickly made a reputation in the theater with *Cabaret* and *The Blue Room*. I saw the latter and thought that Mendes did ingeniously well by his actors; here, in his film debut, he has sensibly concentrated on his actors. Some newcomers to film directing, after theater acclaim, try to prove themselves cinematically with all sorts of fussiness—odd camera angles, intrusive montage, and so on. Mendes simply tells his story clearly. He was much assisted, I'd guess, by the veteran cinematographer, Conrad L. Hall; but Mendes's real concern was his cast, helping them to dig into themselves.

Now if Ball or someone else would only improve the script—and if they could remake the picture with the same cast....

For the first time, I comment on a VCR tape. It's a film that has not been released theatrically in this country and is now being offered to the public in this form; and it's a film by an eminent director. Bertrand Tavernier made *D'Artagnan's Daughter* in 1994: it was acquired by Miramax for U.S. distribution and, according to press reports, disagreements followed between distributor and director about cutting this 130-minute picture. Result: stasis. Further result: issuance of the picture on tape, in the director's version, as *Revenge of the Musketeers*.

The film certainly could have been condensed a bit, particularly the sword fights, but it is good luck, and good fun, to have it available. (Even though the framing has been altered to TV-screen proportions.) This latest derivative of the Dumas material is fundamentally silly, but all the people concerned—and some of them are first class—are well aware of the silliness and are enjoying it so much that the pleasure is infectious.

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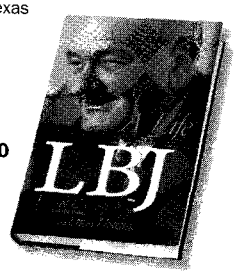

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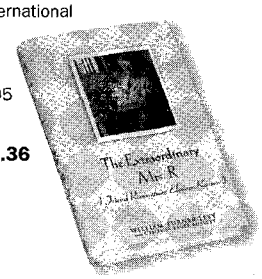

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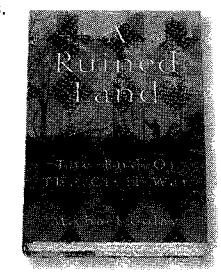

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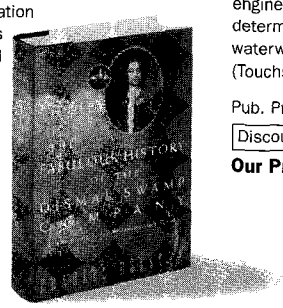

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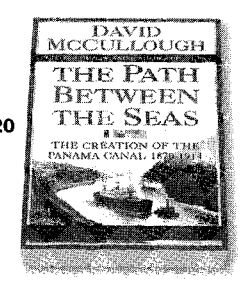

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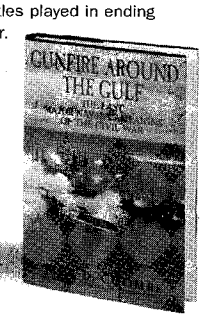

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D'Artagnan, now gray-haired, has a teen-age daughter, Eloise, who has been raised in a convent. How she became expert with a sword in that convent is one of the questions we are implicitly asked not to ask. She flees the convent, encounters a young poet who falls in love with her, rushes to her father in Paris, and involves her father, now a mere fencing teacher, in fighting so complicated a conspiracy that he needs the aid of his three former companions, Athos, Portos, and Aramis. (The last, believe it or not, has become a bishop.) The complexities include a villain who is smuggling the first coffee into France and is also abducting nuns and selling them as slaves in America.

But what actors and what a director. Sophie Marceau, as Eloise, is an embodied caprice—light, fast, funny, pretty, enchanting. Philippe Noiret—and I almost feel like standing as I type his name—is D'Artagnan, paradoxically perfect as Noiret usually is, unpredictable yet exactly what we expect. See, for instance, the moment when he visits the grave, as he thinks, of Athos.

Tavernier's talent is no longer a question: what needs attention is his versatility. The director who made, among many others, *The Clockmaker* and *The Judge and the Assassin*, and several pictures about current social conditions in France, here swashbuckles with the best of them. Verve and flow and an eye for magnificent composition combine to keep us delighted despite the flapdoodle story. The film is like a nineteenth-century opera by a master whose choice of libretto this time deserves a sympathetic wink. ■

Jed Perl on Art

Intoxicating Heresies

THE THROWAWAY GRANDEUR of Raoul Dufy's paintings is like nothing else in twentieth-century art. In his most daring canvases, many of which date from the decade before his death in 1953 at the age of seventy-five, Dufy seems to be tossing the full range of a painter's resources high into the air. And against all the odds he holds aloft the startling color combinations, the bewitching linear arabesques, the images that range from charmingly ordinary to dizzyingly opulent. Whether Dufy is painting some sheet music on a piano, or an entire symphony orchestra, or a black freighter in the bay of Sainte-Adresse, or a model in his studio in the southwestern French city of Perpignan, he creates scatterings and drifts of images, a weave of fantasy and spontaneity that has the effect of a visual stream of consciousness. His swaths of color and his rapid-fire bursts of line summon up form and atmosphere, volume and void; but void is also volume and atmosphere is also form. These paintings are meditations on the ins and outs of the art of painting. They have a suppleness beyond compare.

No wonder that so many artists in the United States have been crazy to see a Dufy retrospective. It has been a long wait. No museum in this country has even attempted to give Dufy his due in close to half a century. And now that we do have a major American show devoted to this artist whose triumphant highwire act is so often dismissed as a sideshow, the retrospective is coming nowhere near New York—and nowhere near Boston, Washington, Chicago, San Francisco, or Los Angeles. The ferociously intelligent retrospective was organized by the Norton Museum of Art in West Palm Beach, Florida, and it is half way through a tour of Southern museums. After closing in Florida, "Raoul Dufy: Last of the Fauves" went to the Dixon Gallery and Gardens in Memphis, where I saw it in August. The show opens in New Orleans this month and goes to San Antonio in January.

David F. Setford, who is the chief curator at the Norton and organized this retrospective, has managed to do something tremendous. By gathering approximately sixty paintings from public and private collections in the States and a few key loans from France, Setford has given us the essential trajectory of Dufy's art. Be warned that the catalogue is unimpressive; Setford is not much of a writer, and he doesn't quite grasp the extent of Dufy's admittedly underground reputation. Yet there was at least one room in Memphis, where four paintings from the *Cargo Noir* series were joined by a *Red Orchestra*, that was so magnificent that I do not expect ever to forget it. Obviously David Setford is that rarity in the contemporary museum world, a man who has an eye for quality—and, even more importantly, a man who has the courage to trust the evidence of his eye.

This exhibition flies in the face of at least a half a century of official thinking about modern art. The catalogue contains a number of arguments to the effect that we are now seeing a sea change in Dufy's reputation. Didier Schulmann, a French curator, does Dufy what some may imagine is the favor of contributing an essay in which he relates Dufy's multiple versions of a single motif to the idea of the series in Jasper Johns's work. I have witnessed earlier attempts to make Dufy appear relevant, but experience tells me that mainstream taste is not going to come around to him anytime soon. If Dufy is regarded at all today, it is as a minor Fauve; or, more likely, as one of the most original textile designers of the century. The work that he did with Paul Poiret and others in the first quarter of the century is extraordinary. In 1984, the Holly Solomon Gallery in New York (inspired by a London retrospective some months earlier) did a show that emphasized this decorative work, and the result was intoxication. But I had some concerns about the Solomon show. I doubt that Dufy's cause is helped by those who suggest that his delight in sometimes playing hooky from painting brings him into line with fashionable end-of-painting polemics.

WITH THE NORTON retrospective, David Setford is demanding that we think of Dufy as a painter—and a great painter. Nothing is included that might suggest an artist in a minor mode; there are none of Dufy's drawings or watercolors or ceramics, none of the graphic work that places him among the most remarkable book illustrators of this century. I had some fleeting regrets about all these absences as I went through the show. The Dixon, which has an amazing collection of eighteenth-century porcelain, would have been a wonderful place to see the elaborate ceramic planters that Dufy dreamed up in the 1920s; they are rococo visions with a modern twist. But I believe that David Setford is absolutely right to stick to the oil paintings. He is insisting that Dufy has a place in painting's major leagues. Many people will regard this show as a gamble, but the gamble pays off big.

To the extent that Dufy is in the official histories, he is presented as a figure in the shadows of Matisse and Picasso, as an artist who reacted to their reactions to Cézanne. The exhibition's subtitle—"Last of the Fauves"—refers to Dufy's alliance with Matisse's coloristic revolution in 1906. But Dufy is no mere follower of Matisse. I think that he is one of a dozen or so twentieth-century artists who extracted from the titanic lessons of Cézanne something all his own.

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Matisse and Picasso looked at Cézanne's late work and realized that distillation is the very essence of artistic (therefore emotional) truth; and there is a gravitas to the late Cézanne that certainly does not bring Dufy to mind. In his greatest work, however, Cézanne also suggests that all large experiences are composed of a near-infinity of infinitesimal experiences—of an endless succession of flashes, fragments, aperçus. This is the side of Cézanne to which Dufy responded as a mature artist in the 1920s, when I assume that he was no longer inclined to take his signals from somewhat faster developing painters such as Matisse, Derain, and Braque.

Dufy's Cézanne is the Cézanne of the late watercolors, where the part stands in for the whole and spontaneity is the outcome of deliberation. Dufy obviously adores the abstractness of those pictures; they may well be the works that made him a watercolorist. He sees in Cézanne's analysis of naturalistic form the outlines of a visual language capable of expressing everything that flashes before his eyes or through his mind: the cozy charm of an atelier, the loveliness of a harvest, the excitement of life in a port city, the atmosphere of a certain piece of music. The conservative label that Dufy never seems to shake is obviously related to his willingness to reconsider the narrative, the anecdote, the vignette. Yet Dufy's notational language is like nothing in earlier art. His quick, calligraphic touch democratizes experience. What we feel in his work is the imagination of an independent-spirited modern man, who loves to look and to fantasize, who likes simple things, and crazily elaborate things, too.

COURTESY NORTON MUSEUM OF ART

Raoul Dufy, "Le Modèle dans l'atelier de la Place Arago à Perpignan," 1949

MUSEUMGOERS WHO DISMISS Dufy's work as touristy or sentimental miss the extent to which this artist presents us with a vision of France as it is experienced in its commonplace particulars, day by day. When Dufy paints a town square, with its slightly comical commemorative statue and its ugly old pile of a hotel, his way of embracing all the little details suggests the view of the native who is in that square all the time, in the morning to buy a baguette, in the evening to drink an apéritif. A late, almost miniaturized canvas representing little but a bench, a tree, and a shuttered façade is movingly unprepossessing; Dufy is painting that any-old-corner that you know intimately. In a view from the window of his Perpignan studio, the glimpse of what I presume is a middle-aged woman walking down the street becomes a touching image of feet-planted-firmly-on-the-ground ordinariness. Dufy is proposing, in the quietest possible way, that happiness is just being alive and seeing what goes on.

Dufy's eye takes in so much. His painterliness reflects the experience of a twentieth-century man who is interested in whatever he observes. In Dufy's France, everything is accessible; you just get in a car and go, so that it is possible to be intimately familiar with the autumnal purple-and-yellow harvests in Normandy as well as with the lush greens of the Mediterranean coast. In *July 14th in Vence* (1920), everybody is dancing beneath a grape arbor on Bastille Day, and Dufy makes me think of the fun of coming into a town and stopping to take in the wonderfully casual celebration that is underway. Gertrude Stein said that "Dufy is pleasure." So he is. But his painting is also about the restlessness that the desire for pleasure can ignite—a restlessness that goes beyond what the naked eye can see to fill the mind's eye with more and more experiences. No one who was less than insatiable could have created *La Fée Électricité*, the vast mural that was Dufy's contribution to the Exposition Internationale in 1937 and is now on permanent display at the Museum of Modern Art of the City of Paris. In this gigantic fantasy on the power of electricity, Dufy fits in everything—the gods with their thunderbolts, the scientists of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the planes and the neon-illuminated cities—and creates a transcendent rush of images.

Dufy's extravagantly improvisational side is evident in a number of harbor scenes that are included in the Norton show. Here his minglings of thick and thin paint and lines in a variety of colors evoke not a particular Mediterranean or Atlantic locale so much as all the thoughts and experiences that you have when you are at the edge of the sea or remember being there. Dufy summons up the hustle of commerce and the simple vacation pleasures, along with the gods and the goddesses whom men once saw in these ocean depths and whom Dufy now imagines sitting right out in the open next to the workers and the vacationers. The harbor in these paintings, circled by docks, parks, church towers, and striped tents, has something of the topographical fantasy of an old-fashioned map of the world. And at the core of each of these canvases is the hunk of a vessel that gives the paintings their name: *Le Cargo Noir*. This dark, mysterious freighter is the still center of these enigmatic images in which water deities and rainbows and fashionable people overlap.

At the bottom of one *Cargo Noir*, Dufy has scrawled this message: "*Peint le 2 Octobre 1951 après ma visite à l'Exposition le Fauvisme.*" By telling us that in this particular scene he is evoking ports that he had painted some forty-five years earlier, Dufy underscores the element of free association that is central to all these works. And the heaviness of that black freighter fits in with the painting's daydream feel: when we let our minds

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wander, dark thoughts sneak up on us, too. Dufy's great idea here is to let that dark abyss linger, as he jots down all sorts of wonderful things, from funny little fishermen with enormous nets to a yellow butterfly that's the size of a small house. In the brick red atmosphere of another *Cargo Noir*, a smaller one, a tiny rainbow miraculously appears.

Dufy, who drew from the figure all his life, evokes gestures and movements with an amazing economy of line. His work has the rough exactness of Oriental calligraphy. These paintings are gloriously loose-jointed. But the spontaneity with which he dashes in his lemony yellows and deep blues and rusty oranges does not preclude a respect for the adamantine laws of French painting, for all the regular divisions of the canvas and the geometric progressions that are epitomized by the Poussins in the Louvre.

COURTESY NORTON MUSEUM OF ART

Raoul Dufy, "Sainte-Adresse: Le Cargo Noir," 1951

The true subject of the *Cargo Noir* paintings, which is memory, is also related to many of Dufy's later compositions on musical themes, where he evokes the emotional impact not only of sounds, but of successions of sounds. In *Red Orchestra* (1946-9) from the Milwaukee Art Museum, and in *Music and the Pink Violin* (1952), in the National Gallery in Washington, Dufy finds colors that fit sounds, and achieves a matching of sensations that recalls the Symbolist ideas that were so popular in avant-garde circles in his youth. He is also working toward the kind of all-in-one coloristic power that, in the 1940s and '50s, was preoccupying Bonnard and Matisse in France and Rothko and Newman in the United States.

The orange-red that illuminates Dufy's wonderful baroque concert hall in *Red Orchestra* gains force from the surrounding array of deeper reds and grayed-over reds; the result is one of the most extraordinary bursts of color in all of art. The National Gallery painting is about a more elusive variety of pinkish, lavender-tinged reds. Here Dufy's renderings of the floral imagery that covers the walls becomes an emanation of that solitary violin, a visual evocation of all the sounds that have been drawn from that now-silent instrument.

Born in Le Havre in 1877, Dufy was very much a Parisian as a young man. In this retrospective, however, he is seen as a painter of the South, which he explored in all its aspects in the years after World War I, as the chic world of Chanel, Cocteau, and Colette took over Provence and Nice and Marseilles. In later years, Dufy spent much time in the southwest of France, where he found treatments that eased the crippling arthritis that left him barely able to hold a brush—even as, like Renoir before him, he painted his utterly unanguished canvases. Dufy's southern connection makes this show perfectly apposite for the four museums in which it is appearing. I have no doubt that he would have appreciated Memphis's Dixon Gallery and Gardens. He would have admired the Impressionist and Post-Impressionist works collected by Margaret and Hugo Dixon (he was an Englishman who was in the cotton business in Dallas, Houston, and Memphis). And in the gardens that surround the gallery, Dufy might have been tempted to pull out his watercolors and paint these vistas in which amusing statuary punctuates the lush Memphis foliage.

David Setford, the curator of the show, may be a man with modern ideas, but he would probably never have gotten this chance to present Dufy if he were not working with institutions that are still guided by an old-guard that believes in the art of painting. From what I know of three of the four museums where the show is appearing—the Norton, the Dixon, and the Marion Koogler McNay Art Museum in San Antonio—I expect that their current policies still reflect the values of the founding collectors, whose interest in the modern movement gave these institutions their particular shape and emphasis. (These museums are a bit like small versions of Washington's Phillips Collection.)

Dufy is appearing, then, under the old dispensation. Still, the point needs to be made that the audience for this work is not just old fogeys. Over the days I was in Memphis, the Dixon had a small but steady stream of visitors, and some of them were young. I overheard people voicing a whole range of opinions about the show, but for the most part they were taking a careful look. That is all you can ask. The installation at the Dixon left much to be desired; the walls were too dark and there was not enough light. Dufy, however, carried all before him.

The impact of the show made it all the more frustrating to think of how long we have waited for it. I could not get out of my mind the steady if quiet drumbeat of interest that there has been for Dufy in New York—and the thought of how few American artists will get to see this remarkable exhibition. It was back in 1971 that I first heard a serious discussion of Dufy's work in New York, when Leland Bell, a painter without rival when it came to spotlighting the underappreciated glories of early twentieth-century French art, spoke about Dufy one afternoon at the New York Studio School. And he was not Dufy's only admirer. The poets who have written enthusiastically about Dufy include Wallace Stevens and John Ashbery. Among the painters, Fairfield Porter and David Hockney have put pen to paper to express their admiration. Holly Solomon's 1984 show was inspired by the interest of painters such as Robert Kushner and Kim MacConnel; and the catalogue of the Solomon exhibition also included praise from Henry Geldzahler.

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This kind of interest ought to be enough to get a New York retrospective off the ground, but that will not happen so long as Dufy's brand of innovation-within-tradition remains anathema to the trendoids who control the museums. Still, as I stood in the Dixon in Memphis, watching museumgoers take in what amounted to the heresy of Dufy, I could not help thinking that there is a consensus that can be built in this country around a more expansive and adventuresome view of twentieth-century art. This Dufy retrospective gives us an inkling of what can be accomplished when curators know how to take another look at modern art, and believe that there is an audience that will take another look with them. So smaller museums can make a difference. At the Norton Museum of Art in West Palm Beach, they have pulled off the most important revaluation of a twentieth-century artist to be seen in an American museum in perhaps a quarter of a century. ■

The Professional

By JAMES WOOD

More Matter: Essays and Criticism by John Updike

(Knopf, 928 pp., $35)

One should drill one's hole where the wood is thickest.—Schlegel

JOHN UPDIKE IS a luxurious mystery. He writes prose of extraordinary sumptuousness and great flexibility, instantly capable, as the context demands, of lyric float or steely capture. Most American writers file mere diligent digits alongside his soaring figures. Such are his deep verbal resources that even when he seems to be writing rapidly or loosely, he resembles a rich man rapidly rounding off a huge bill, as if he were generously adding an easy twenty percent to an already lavish paragraph. In his new book, the tiniest and lightest piece of journalism will glitter with a finely chosen adjective, or glide around a builded crescent of syntax.

Why, then, would such a writer publish a book such as this one, with its serried trivia, its powdery bon-bons concealing sweet hollows, its endless and comfortable journalistic expertise, a book that breathes the complacency of minor triumph? Updike is, by common consent, thought to be a "major American writer," and indeed he is; but this book is not in any way the gesture of a major writer. It represents a flight from struggle, a kind of metaphysical spa, where an ideational silence is enforced so that the writer can better concentrate on watering his nice words, without threat from the coarseness or the abrasion of true intellect. One reads page after page, mindful always of the high level of craftsmanship, yet always with the growing certainty that it shouldn't be as easy as this. One should drill where the wood is thickest, not where it is already soft.

The mystery is not that Updike published this book—he apparently finds *not* publishing about as hard as stifling a yawn once it has begun—but that he has spent the last eight years writing so much light journalism. In this respect, his big book reads like an argument for an answering machine, or a fierce secretary. The abundance of elegant nonsense collected in *More Matter* prompts psychoanalytic interpretation. What would have encouraged one of America's most distinguished novelists, who presumably is not crying for the money, to have divested himself of so many little squibs, to have squandered so many words?

Here, after all, is Updike writing a short piece for *Allure* on suntanning (which produces an alluring line about "closing my eyes under a crimson fury of protons"); and for *Vogue* on women dancing; two little meditations on his new house alarm (one for *The New Yorker*, and the other for *Architectural Digest*, in whose current automobile supplement, for October, he can be found gossiping in gilt about all the cars he has driven); on "Lust" for the *New York Times Book Review*; and a few hundred sugary words about Christmas in New York for the in-flight magazine of Lufthansa (not the only such home: late in the book there appears a little effusion on the theme of "Home" for *USAir Magazine*, in which we learn that "we are all homeless to a degree, living on biological terms

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Richard Wirthlin
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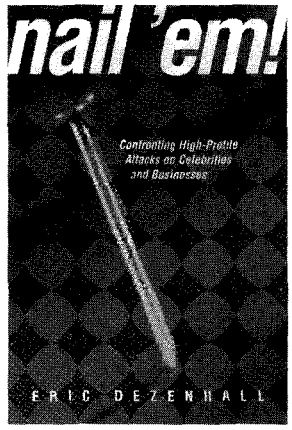

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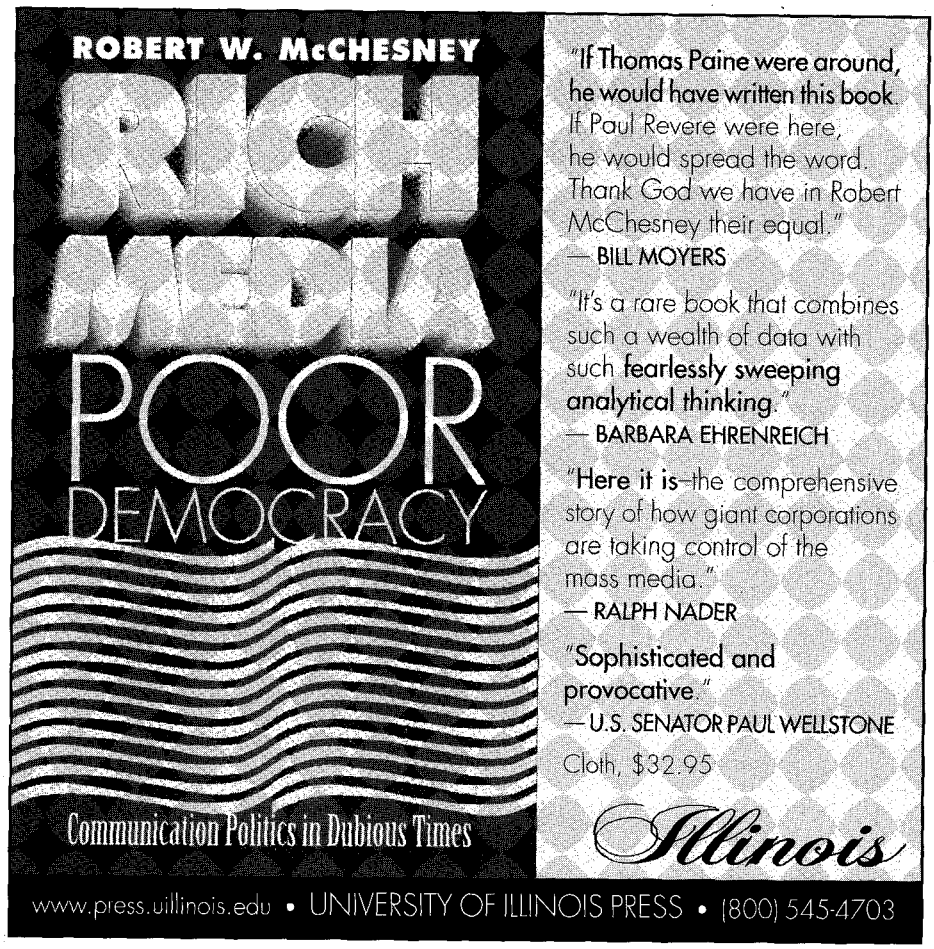
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we did not create, on a planet merely for rent").

Perhaps not even Mr. Shawn intended these dainty dissipations. Along with the now-familiar statement of his infatuation with *The New Yorker*, which is beginning to seem a little juvenile in a 67-year-old writer ("I wanted to appear in *The New Yorker*—indeed, as a would-be writer, I wanted little else"), Updike makes an admission in his introduction: "Let's face it, gentle reader: I set out to be a magazine writer, a wordsmith as the profession was understood in the industrial first half of the century, and I like seeing my name in what they used to call 'hard type.'"

But rather too much of the journalism collected here seems to be set in soft type. A request came from the London *Observer* to write about a favorite hour of the day, and Updike obliged with a few hundred words about eleven o'clock in the morning: "At eleven in the morning, the day is young but not too young. It is on its feet; its coltish wobbles and blinks are outgrown. This is the hour, if ever, for getting down to business"—or getting down to journalism, rather. He explains the cold for a Brazilian newspaper; and replies to a request—or perhaps we should now call it a demand, since Updike seems to lack the power of refusal—from *Die Zeit* to describe a photograph that touched his conscience (a 1952 snap of Ingrid Bergman, as it happens); and donates to *The New Yorker* several sweeteners about the changing semiotics of car horns and car lights ("car lights, too, say more than they used to"), and how, sometime during the Reagan years, manufacturers' packaging became harder to open. (He tells us that this piece excited more mail than any of his others.)

It is hardly surprising, given this level of comprehensive diligence, that Updike feels the compulsion to introduce a book of *The Paris Review*'s interviews with writers, and to contribute a foreword to his own bibliography, wittily noting that his bibliographer, Jack De Bellis, "has missed, I believe, my one formal contribution to my own bibliography, a published letter to the *Bulletin of Bibliography* (Westport, Connecticut) which I hereby reprint. . . ."

WHY DOES HE do it? Obviously there is a desire here to have the last word, to clothe a subject in the best words. This is not necessarily a benign impulse. It has about it a frigidity of closure, a power of lavish cancellation: Updike as the super, the first to turn on the lights and the last to turn them off. That a powerful will-to-power drives this overproduction, a will amounting almost to hostility, or at least to aggression, is suggested by the number of times that Updike has chosen to review his contemporaries.

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He may be unaware of his motives in this matter: it as if he is rolling over his fellow novelists in his sleep and smothering them. He has visited Bellow's novels three or four times, increasingly negatively; and in this book he sharply reviews Philip Roth (with a characteristic loftiness: "moral ambiguity, Semitic subdivision, has always been his chosen briar patch"), scolds Tom Wolfe, ambivalently praises Norman Rush, laments John Cheever's tempestuous inner life, indulges Norman Mailer, and condescends to E.L. Doctorow. The Doctorow review is oddly revealing, because it is a rather sniffy two-hundred word "Briefly Noted" review for *The New Yorker*, which ran, presumably, unsigned. It hardly merits its new publication, and its consequent identification, unless the identification of its author is the point. (Now, at least, Doctorow has his enemy's eyeball in sight.) When Updike reviews Cheever's *Journals* (the piece appeared in these pages), and writes that "to speak personally, this old acquaintance and keen admirer of Cheever's had to battle, while reading these *Journals*, with the impulse to close his eyes," the reader wonders why "this old acquaintance" felt the need to have put himself in the position of writing these words?

Of course, Updike is at liberty to comment on his contemporaries' writing. As he himself admits, however, he is not a critic, but a very talented reviewer; no general urgency of critical hygiene presents itself to him. And it is far from clear that truth gains much by it. Quite the contrary. To insist on reviewing your coevals would seem to represent a wish, however unexpressed, to enter into hostile evasion. For one can hardly tell the plainest truth about a book whose author one might meet at a party or an awards ceremony. Yet at the same time, precisely those evasions will constitute a kind of code, easily deciphered by the subject as the *real* truth.

A REVEALING MOMENT OCCURS in one of Updike's introductions—reprinted here, of course—to a collection of Magnum photographs of artists. Updike writes: "When I was in college, T.S. Eliot was represented in anthologies almost invariably by the same expressionless profile; my colleague Philip Roth repeats one stern photograph on jacket after jacket with a kindred sacralizing effect." One's first reaction to this feline toying, as so often in Updike, is the feeling that his words should not flow so professionally. Indeed, there is something distastefully professionalized about "my colleague." (Imagine Dostoevsky on "my colleague Tolstoy.") Next, one simply inverts Updike's sense, and takes his word "colleague" to mean almost its opposite. The sentence seems to ooze careful malice; it is greasy with bad faith.

Certainly, and more generally, Updike's diction has a suspicious mock modesty. This appears to amount to the hostility of the shy, in which the speaker unconsciously hopes that his hearers will take his feeble words and turn them into their malicious opposites, so granting the speaker his or her true desires. Thus he writes that his publishers of forty years are still "the obliging firm of Alfred A. Knopf," and its employees are "saintly minions" who "labor day after day far past dark over their endless proofs"; and those newspapers who carry advertisements for his books, a routine engagement after all, he thanks in one re-published speech, absurdly, as "those plucky organs of the print trade." Elsewhere, he speaks of his career as a short-story writer as if he had been concocting gentle acrostics: "The quiet disturbances of fiction suited us of the Silent Generation." (Updike may have learned some of this tone of ironic self-belittlement from Henry James, a beautifully plush self-mocker. He has certainly learned some of his syntactical delicacy from that source. In a letter of 1887 to Robert Louis Stevenson, for instance, James sounds a very Updikean tone, when he thanks Stevenson for praising his early

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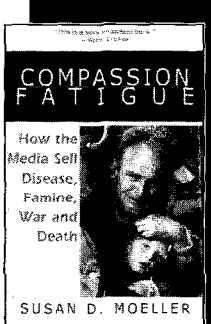

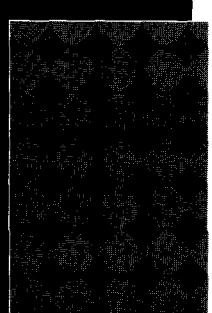

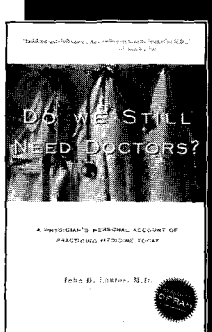

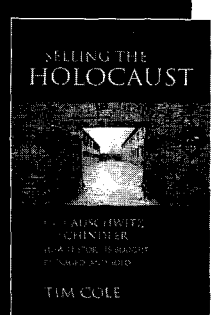

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novel *Roderick Hudson*: "I am really delighted you can find something at this late day in that work in which my diminutive muse first tried to elongate her little legs.")

In an introduction to a book of Jill Krementz's photographs of writers' desks—it is only right that Updike should wrap this project in silken finalities, should sum up his fellow novelists—he relaxes into expensive sententiousness, writing of "the tentative, tender creator, who still hopes to establish, in this clumsy, improvised setting, some connection with the ethereal and everlasting spirit of literature." He ends the piece with that strange, frictionless optimism that sometimes marks his fiction: "These desktops and nooks are happy places—chaste beds of conception, rumpled and warm." How can he know this about so many different writers' homes? The words here seem so cheaply purchased that they begin to disclose an opposing darkness; we are liable to conclude from this odd assertion, accurately or not, that Updike's desk must be a decidedly unhappy place to engender such forced wisdom.

But forced wisdom is one of the energetic evasions most abundantly displayed in this book. Updike's journalistic perorations have a common pattern: his lovely prose works its subject up into a little vogue, discovers a sheeny local texture and lovingly aerates it, and then ends by breathing out a warm and wise abstract gas. A piece for the *Michigan Quarterly Review*, on the male body, closes: "A man and his body are like a boy and the buddy who has a driver's license and thus use of his father's car for the evening; you go along, gratefully, for the ride." In his piece about women dancing, he tells us that he no longer dances much, which disappoints his wife: "Well, I tell her, life is more than a two-step. But in my heart I fear it is not; we are born (step one) and then we die (step two), and between-times the drumbeat of the pulse demands that we act out its rhythm." Reviewing *U & I*, Nicholson Baker's book about Updike, Updike finishes with the thought that "his basic point is serious: out of the books of others we sift a book of our own, wherein we read the lessons we want to hear." He informs his Brazilian readers that: "The cold has the philosophical value of reminding men that the universe does not love us. Cold as absolute as the black tomb rules space; sunshine is a local condition, and the moon hangs in the sky to illustrate that matter is usually inanimate."

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THESE SOFT, DROWSY *summa*, little pillowy mounds of thought, are like a father's final soothing words to a child before sleep. Alas, the reader resents being babied by Updike, and feels trapped in this cradle of language. In part, Updike may have inherited his habit of tender sententiousness (which can be found occasionally in his fiction and overwhelmingly in his poems) from a certain institutional journalistic confidence with which he grew up. *The New Yorker*, for whose pages he so pined as an adolescent, was a metropolitan glamorpuss, which believed that every plate could be luxuriously licked clean: any subject could be given its definitive formulation, its living-death sentence, as it were; and naturally, every subject, by regal rote, would eventually be selected. (Updike began writing pieces for "The Talk of the Town.") A kind of consuming liveliness prevailed.

But Updike, of course, has verbal powers far deeper than a magazine writer's. He possesses also a confidence in language that goes beyond the secular bounce of the old *New Yorker*, and has become instead an almost theological optimism about language's capacity to refer. Just as his sequences of novels (the Rabbit books and the Bech books) testify to a belief that stories can be continued, that the doubt of interruption is not a significant menace, so Updike's exquisite language, and how he chooses to bestow that language on the ignoblest journalistic subjects, testifies to a belief that words do not fail us. The world can always be brought out of its cloudiness and made clear in a fair season. He is strikingly unmodern in this regard. His words are not gouged by silence, as

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words are in Beckett or Bernhard, but are wounds in silence's side. Words go on.

But if Updike's certainty about language is not really modern, it is not quite premodern, and not quite theological, for all that it seems religious in impulse. For God does not enrich language, but beggars it, forcing the believer into scrambling approximations and ineffabilities: the Psalmist was "consumed away in thy sight." D. H. Lawrence is a truly modern, and truly religious, writer, for he is bullied on two sides by unspeakability, one secular-tragic and modern, and one religious-tragic and ancient, and in the end he can only solve his besiegement by propounding a very paradoxical anti-doctrinal doctrine of ineffability. Lawrence's language, with its curious, desperate repetitions, its beautiful uglinesses, its peculiar wrenched locutions, its clumsy absence of elegance, is a prose menaced by both God and the gods. Gerard Manley Hopkins was, of course, a more purely Christian writer, yet one who, like Lawrence, saw that language must falter in its praise of creation because it is not adequate to it; his tottering compounds are like ladders laid on top of each other, aspiring to God. His very reaching incarnated a humility, because it acknowledged the frailty of its quest, and thereby its experimentalism, both cognitive and formal.

UPDIKE, A CHRISTIAN who claims to have been influenced by Kierkegaard and Karl Barth, and who writes about his faith in *More Matter*, has a serenity about the uses of language that seems neither Christian nor modern, but almost, at times, pagan. The great celebrator of surfaces distinguishes visually between surfaces, but not metaphysically. Updike finds the same apparent degree of sensuality in everything, whether it is the "tender-skinned vulnerability" of the phallus, or a woman's labia layered like slices of smoked salmon, or the sound the fridge makes, or "the miraculous weave of his jockey pants."

Certainly, he counts such abundance as the beneficence of God's creation, and tasks the novelist with the intoxicated logging of such data. He has several times written, and does so again in this book, that artistic creation is a kind of echo of the larger, divine Creation. Having sex is itself a kind of creative homage: "If God created the world, He created sex, and one way to construe our inexhaustible sexual interest is as praise of Creation." Fiction, he observes, is "rooted in an act of faith . . . the impulse of praise—or its inverse, lament or execration—motivates literature as its deepest and most simple and noble."

Updike is certainly a rhapsode rather than a plaintiff. He may indeed have been

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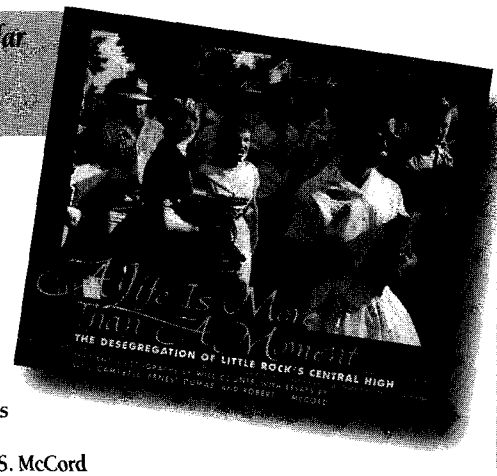

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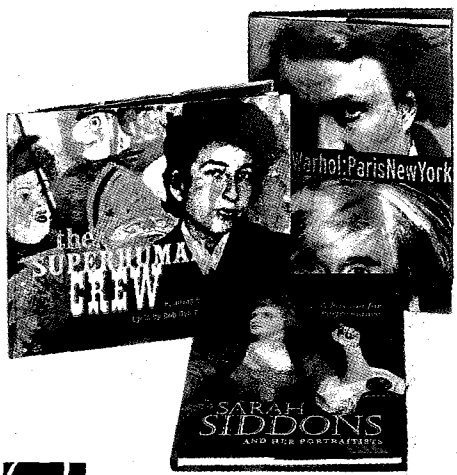

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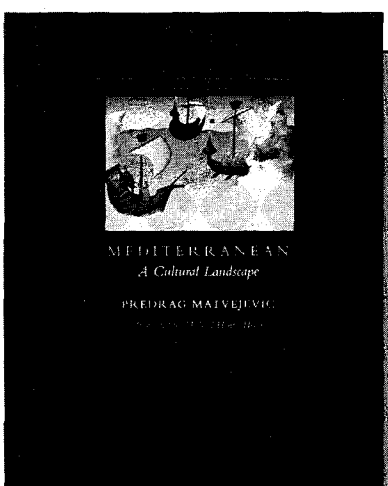

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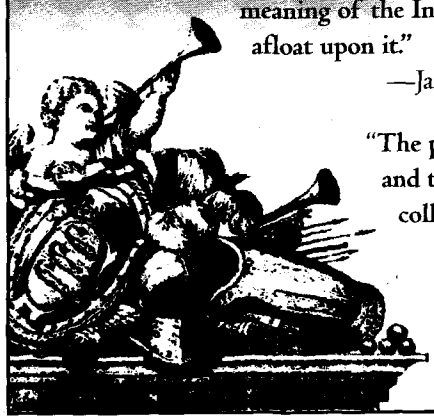

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influenced in this specific area by Barth, who argued against the idea that we should see the world as a proof of God's existence (commonly called the argument from design), but that instead we should see creation as "the formal presupposition" of God's existence. In other words—and Barth does not quite say this—we should infer a reassurance from design, not a proof. We should be grateful for the theological reminder which reality's textures encode, rather than hunt irritably after the proofs which they cannot disclose. The argument from design, in its fierceness, is likely to disappoint; but the world as a presupposition tends toward benign thankfulness. This is essentially Updike's creative posture, and it sheds some light on the way he consumes the world's surfaces.

And yet the inexorability of Updike's reality-praise, its innocence of fatigue or tragic disturbance, its devotion to the similitude of all surfaces, is only quasi-religious, and, curiously, in its tranquillity is not really Barthian, and certainly not Kierkegaardian at all. It sometimes gives Updike the aspect of a pagan sun-worshipper who sees the sun reflected everywhere, on whom night has never fallen: his optimistic lexicon is never solstice-starved. Where, in Updike's work, does the clumsiness of meaning ever exhaust the shapeliness of language? Where does violent truth make his words short-winded with resentment? For the difficulty with an untroubled faith in language's capacities is that, first of all, and generally, language does fail all of us; and secondly, more acutely, that language sometimes fails Updike, often in the very midst of his serene enactments of his very faith in language.

OF COURSE, THERE are many occasions when Updike's quick-eyed language makes luminous that which was only dull before his sight fell upon it. He is a gorgeous craftsman; like those workers whose job is to spit gold leaf onto the Buddha, he is lovely even when he is only scattering his riches. Yet his journalism exposes a verbal complacency that can be found throughout his work; *More Matter* is instructive in this regard. He is loose, for instance, with his adverbs and adjectives, which he bestows condescendingly. In *Roger's Version*, a characteristic moment occurs when a passing woman is noticed, and tagged, as "poignantly breastless." This has the true Updikean flavor: the expensive adverb, chosen for its vintage. But what can it mean? There is nothing necessarily poignant about a breastless woman. The phrase is too minor too capture actual poignancy, while the word "poignant" is too large, too

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lyrical, to be applied to the ordinary experience of seeing a flat-chested woman. While seeming sentimentally to sympathize with a passing character, it condescends misogynistically; anyone who did find this woman poignant, for whatever reason, would probably not use the word "poignant." In other words, "poignantly" is both too poignant (for the situation glimpsed) and not poignant enough (for any potential situation).

Language is simultaneously inflated and deflated at such a moment, almost as if it were condescending to itself, and thus, somehow, canceling itself out: it is an example of bad faith, or lyric kitsch. (Kitsch is, among other things, an unknowing collusion in self-limitation.) *More Matter* is full of such moments. Updike is fond of the word "gallant," for instance. He seems to praise a novel by the Dutch writer Harry Mulisch, and ends his review with the remark that "this blithely big novel is a gallant gesture from a generous imagination." But, somehow, the word "gallant" is not gallant enough; or it is too gallant and not gallant enough, giving the reader the sense, doubtless unfairly, that Updike is somewhat condescending to Mulisch, and is then somewhat condescending to his own condescension.

AT TIMES, NOT only his language, but also his syntax, enacts this self-canceling process. He ends a warm review of *Watermark*, Joseph Brodsky's book about Venice, with the words: "We read *Watermark* enraptured by its gallant attempt to distill a precious meaning from life's experience—to make a spot on a globe a peephole into universal circumstance, and to fashion of one's personal chronic tourism a crystal whose facets reflect an entire life, with exile and ill health glinting at the edges of planes whose direct glare is sheer beauty." This is the kind of stuffed prose that gets called "Nabokovian." It is rather kitschy. Its syntactic suspensions and deferrals inflict no actual torsion on meaning; they merely corrugate the paper they appear on. And that word "gallant," again!

Often Updike transfers onto his subjects attributes that seem better to characterize his own frame of mind than theirs. He writes, astonishingly, in his little piece on "Lust," that "Jesus's plea for the adulterous woman and His fondness for female company, high and low, give a genial tinge to His ministry." A "genial tinge"! This is Jesus he is talking about, not Eustace Tilly. The words, like "gallant" and "poignantly" (and Updike's fondness for "tender"), are simultaneously inadequate and presumptuous. They are inadequate because meaning snakes past their feet; and they are presumptuous because they think they can tread on truth so flippantly, in such casual slippers.

Repeatedly, Updike exhibits this strange, paradoxical, self-canceling quality. It is as if he glimpses his own complacency in these gaps, and then tries to hide it by condescending to, and so distancing himself from, that very complacency. The effect, naturally, is only a deeper sense of the original complacency—a layered complacency. Such is the reader's feeling in a characteristic, almost sad moment in a piece included in this book called "Me and My Books." We are told that it was intended for the back page of *The New York Times Book Review*, but ended up instead in *The New Yorker*. Updike looks at the fifty-plus books he has written, and confesses that he is tugged by the sad thought that he has not done all that he wanted to do:

> Somewhere in their several million pondered, proofread, printed words I must have done my best, sung my song, had my say. But my panicked awareness, as the cut-off age of sixty-five approaches, is of all that *isn't* in them—almost everything, it suddenly seems. *Worlds* are not in them. In the face of this vacuity arises the terrible itch to—what else?—write another book, a book that, like one more ingredient sprinkled into problematic batter, will make the whole thing rise.

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One is first moved by this admission, by its vulnerability. But Updike quickly unmoves one. The banal ease of the image—ingredients into batter—cools the temperature of the confession. And then one notices that "the cut-off age of sixty-five," retirement age, seems to afflict Updike as it should surely not afflict a writer, unless he treats his writing like dentistry. This, then, is less an anxiety about literary failure than about failed professionalism, professionally expressed—and confided to the readers of *The New Yorker*.

Thus a serious writer undoes himself, mysteriously shedding his talents on tasks that are beneath him. This scene lights another near the end of the volume, in which Updike credits his Christian faith for giving him comfort in his life and courage in his work. "For it [Christianity] tells us that truth is holy, and truth-telling a noble and useful profession. . . ." A profession, certainly, on the evidence of this calm and oddly unserious book, but too useful and not noble enough. ■

O'Schindler

By FINTAN O'TOOLE

The Great Shame and the Triumph of the Irish in the English-Speaking World by Thomas Keneally

(Doubleday, 712 pp., $35)

IN THE INTRODUCTION to his aptly named new book, *The Great Shame*, Thomas Keneally remarks that, after the release of Steven Spielberg's film of his novel *Schindler's Ark*, he was "frequently thanked for having documented on a human scale, through jaunty, disreputable Oskar Schindler, the Jewish catastrophe of the Second World War." With what he calls "a delighted and slightly guilty bemusement," Keneally found that Jews in particular felt that he had "to an extent validated the past for those who had lived through it, and had restored their history to their children."

Leaving aside the coy gavotte of flagrant self-praise and blushing modesty, these are alarming statements. *Schindler's Ark* is a novel. It may draw on real events, and Keneally may have claimed in his preface that he had "wished to avoid all fiction, since fiction would debase the record"; but Keneally chose nevertheless to use "the texture and devices of the novel" rather than the forms of history. Yet now Keneally introduces himself as the man who finally documented the Holocaust and finally restored its history.

For all his protestations of embarrassment, Keneally is not too embarrassed to repeat the claim that he had "validated the past for those who had lived through it." To validate something is to assert and to bolster the claim that it is real. So what Keneally wants to tell us now is that his fiction made the actual lived experience of Holocaust survivors real, not just for others but for themselves. With really astonishing vanity, he has turned what might be a sustainable claim, "that the experience of the survivors validates the imaginative claims of the novel," on its head. So deranged has the blurring of fact and fiction become that the fictional tale is more real than the experience. Auschwitz and Dachau are credible not because people who were there can testify to their experiences, but because Thomas Keneally has written his novel.

In form, if not in moral import, *The Great Shame* takes this degeneration one step further. While *Schindler's Ark* at least presents itself to the reader, however ambiguously, as a novel, *The Great Shame* is, in the tortuous words of the publisher's blurb, "a remarkable work of non-fiction based on a quest not unlike Thomas Keneally's previous quest for Oskar Schindler." On the one hand, Keneally presents himself directly as a historian, apparently leaving behind the ambiguities of fiction for the rigors of fact. On the other hand, the overheated references to *Schindler's Ark* and the use of the word "triumph" in the new book's subtitle hint at a wider imaginative purpose.

Keneally clearly believes that he is doing for the Irish what he believes he did for the Jews. He makes the analogy explicit at the end of the book, when he writes, of the shrinking of the Irish population through emigration, that "this great Irish crisis has produced in the Irish themselves a certain amount of that survival shame which one encounters also in certain survivors of the Holocaust." It is hard to imagine what evidence might justify such an insensitive analogy between the feelings of those who emerged alive from the concentration camps and the sentiments engendered by a long and complicated history of economic migration, and Keneally has none to offer. The link invites the reader to accept *The Great Shame* not merely as a historical account, but also as a restoration of the Irish past comparable to the author's "validation" of the Holocaust.

THE NARRATIVE OF the Irish diaspora is certainly worth telling. Few societies have ever exported such an extraordinary proportion of their population as Ireland did in the years after the traumatic potato famine of the 1840s. Even in absolute terms, the emigration of more than four million Irish between the famine and the First World War was a significant global event; the exodus had a profound and lasting impact on the development of the United States, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and Great Britain. In relative terms, however, it was a phenomenon without parallel. Of all those born in Ireland between 1845 and 1854, fewer than half were still living in Ireland in 1900. A population of eight million in 1840 became a population of four million in the early twentieth century.

Much has been written about this immense human upheaval, but there is a great deal more to be said. Keneally's aim, as he puts it, is "to try to tell the tale of the Irish in the new world and the old through the experiences of those transported to Australia for gestures of social and political dissent." This, on the face of it, is a worthy aim. But it begs some rather obvious questions. Can "the tale of the Irish" be told through the lives of political dissidents forced into exile in Australia? Are the middle-class transportees on whom Keneally tends to focus representative of the society from which they came? And, most importantly, is there a single entity that can reasonably be called "the Irish" and a single "story" in which its historical experience can be encompassed?

The answer to each of these questions is no. In the period with which Keneally is concerned—the second half of the nineteenth century—only a tiny minority of Irish emigrants were political deportees. The vast majority were economic refugees. The bulk of those who emigrated beyond Europe, moreover, went not to

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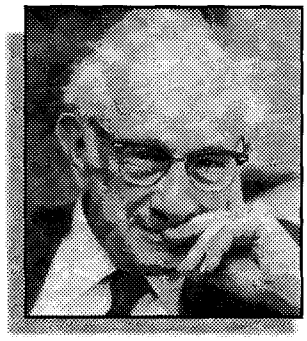
Australia but to the United States: eighty-four percent in the 1860s, ninety-three percent in the 1890s.

In 1891, for example, when the number of Irish emigrants to Australia was at its peak, there were 1.9 million Irish-born people living in the United States, compared to 227,000 in Australia. In all, no more than one Irish emigrant in twelve was ever to be found in Australia. The Irish mattered a great deal to the development of Australia, but Australia mattered little to the development of Ireland. As the historian David Fitzpatrick has put it, "If Australia was a minor destination for the Irish, Ireland was a major source for the Australians." By placing this small minority of emigrants at the center of his story, Keneally is reflecting Australian experience rather than Irish experience.

THE AUSTRALIAN WRITER goes even further by concentrating not only on a minority of Irish Australians, but on a minority of that minority. Between 1788 and 1868, approximately 36,000 Irish convicts were transported to the Australian colonies. It was a tiny number in the context of a vast exodus. And then Keneally splits even this little atom to focus on an infinitesimally small particle of the transported population: the well-to-do nationalist political elite. The radical lawyers, journalists, and landowners who take up most of the space in Keneally's book lived in a different world from the children of the poor tenant farmers who occupied most of the space in the emigrant ships. The vast majority of the nineteenth-century Irish emigrants to Australia, as to the United States, described themselves as either laborers or domestic servants. Until the 1860s, most of them were illiterate.

One of the truly distinctive things about Irish emigration to the new world, moreover, was that so many of the emigrants were women. In Australia, where Keneally begins his narrative, there were, by 1870, equal numbers of Irish-born men and women, whereas among the English and Scots men outnumbered women by a ratio of five to three. In the United States, the census of 1910 showed that, among the Irish-born population, there were just 83 Irishmen for every hundred Irishwomen, whereas there were almost twice as many Italian men as Italian women. What distinguishes the Irish emigrant experience, in other words, is that it is largely, perhaps primarily, a matter of what happened to poor women.

The story that Keneally tells, on the other hand, is largely about what happened to a group of relatively rich men. Keneally seems broadly aware of this, and he quotes one of his wealthy protago-



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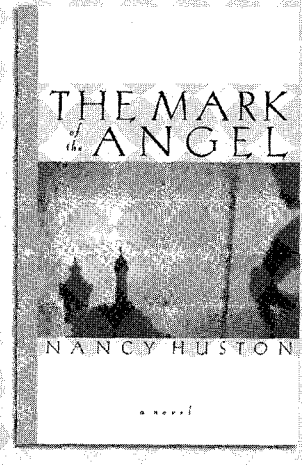

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nists, William Smith O'Brien, as acknowledging that his own rations in prison, however meager by the standards of a landowner, are "superlatively rich and abundant" compared to the diet of a peasant in famine-stricken Ireland. But this does not prevent Keneally from making his "tale of the Irish," for the most part, only an account of what happened to a small group of Irish nationalist revolutionaries (principally William Smith O'Brien, Thomas Francis Meagher, and John Mitchel) transported to Australia for their part in the rather farcically abortive rising of 1848, known to most Irish people by the mock-heroic title of the Battle of the Widow McCormack's Cabbage Patch. And even this story turns out not to be a coherent story but an increasingly disjointed series of fragments. The most honest thing about the book, indeed, is Keneally's failure to reduce the shards of a disconnected history to a lucid narrative.

It might be argued in Keneally's defense that this failure is inevitable, because no twentieth century historian could ever recover the experience of poor Irish exiles in Australia 150 years ago. But there is, in fact, a book that does precisely that: David Fitzpatrick's moving and intellectually rigorous *Oceans of Consolation: Personal Accounts of Irish Migration to Australia*, which appeared in 1994. Fitzpatrick's book is a stunning collection of fourteen sequences of letters to and from Australia composed between 1843 and 1906 by ordinary migrants and their families back home. He uses the letters and other sources to reconstitute these individual stories, bringing us as close as we will ever get to the thoughts, the feelings, and the experiences of people who had previously existed only as statistics.

Both as a model and as a source of raw material, *Oceans of Consolation* is the obvious place to start. Shockingly, Keneally seems unaware of its existence. It is not mentioned in his bibliography, and its revelations of the diversity of Irish experience in Australia have no impact on his approach. If he had read it, he might have understood the folly of attempting to use political figures such as William Smith O'Brien to stand for the emigrant experience as a whole. He might have read, for example, William Dalton in County Tipperary sardonically writing to his friend Ned Hogan in New South Wales, and asking "about your frind Smith O Brine did you Call to See him"—the joke being that poor servants such as Hogan barely inhabited the same planet as gentlemen like O'Brien. He might also have noted Dalton's skepticism about O'Brien's claims to be a national leader: "I see by the papers that he is as mad as ever . . . I cannot compare him to anyone but to Don Quixet When he went to fight the wind mill." But such awkward knowledge would have spoiled Keneally's story.

THE GREAT SHAME begins as an exercise in genealogy. Keneally attempts to reconstruct the experience of his wife's ancestor Hugh Larkin, transported from County Galway to New South Wales in 1833 for threatening a landlord, Simeon Seymour of Somerset House, with whom he was in dispute. Keneally traces him through his trial, his work as a sheep-herder in the outback, his marriage to another transported Irish convict named Mary Shields, his emergence as a small-time businessman, and his death as a raving alcoholic in 1857.

If Hugh Larkin's story could indeed be told, if Keneally had actually documented the ideas and the aspirations of an obscure man torn from rural Europe and hurled into the parallel universe of the Australian outback, he would have written an indispensable work of history. Or if, faced with the inescapable tautology that little can be known about obscure lives, Keneally had written a novel about Hugh Larkin, he might at least have enabled us to imagine what such an exile might have experienced. (He could even have "validated" it.) But he does neither of these things. He creates instead a disjointed hybrid of fact and fiction, embroidering the sparse documentation that records Larkin's existence with rhetorical suppositions about what Larkin must have thought or felt.

Keneally is not daunted, for example, by his complete ignorance of the circumstances in which Hugh Larkin wooed his first wife Esther in Ireland. He gives us a verse of an old Gaelic song and tells us that Hugh "would have been required to use" this kind of flirtatious language. He assures us that "the courtship of Hugh and Esther had been, if at all characteristic of their society, particularly ardent and poetic, driven by furious longing, observed by an entire rural community which did not countenance fornication, but put a premium on flirtation as an art." This makes as much sense as a historian in the middle of the next century pretending to be able to describe the courtship of a particular couple in America in the 1960s by reference to the lyrics of "I Want to Hold Your Hand." There is a double absurdity here. In the first place we are asked to assume that Larkin embodied, even in his sexual feelings, a set of generalized social and cultural characteristics. And then we are asked to accept that a typical Irish marriage of the 1830s, with all the arrangements of property and family alliances that went with it, was "driven by furious longing."

And there is, besides, a terrible condescension implicit in Keneally's method. Instead of honoring the individual lives of obscure people, his treatment of them implies that they have no individuality.

After a Manner of Speaking

He listened to himself a long time.
He liked this, the sea change of his breathing,
the aerosol of his voice moving sound

as he sang—the sufferer in the song,
stung with disappointment, but able
still to sing to his injured self.

Or between his songs, he composed postcards,
recitatives of love's sweet sound bites,
he meant to send to his well wishers.

If he went out, he'd speak to others,
their worlds were such a puzzlement.
They'd stare. If only he could speak their tongue.

And when he'd shop store windows, a thought
would work its way up his throat in a voice
so like his mother's, it would cause alarm.

Then he would rest beneath the lineaments
of trees, sunlight filtered through his call,
his reply to the chirp of nearby children.

Yet sometimes the unruly wash of cars,
men shouting, bit into his air and made
him forget what he wanted to say.

Back home he out maneuvered them, sealing
the tear with his own talking, his voice
their sure erasure, now sound, now sense.

Steven Graves

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While much of the best of recent social history tries to lift concrete personalities from the murk of "the masses," Keneally pushes Larkin back down into the gray underworld of stereotypes and cyphers. In his arrogance, Keneally assumes the right to tell us, on the basis of nothing more than his own godlike intuitions, what Larkin "would have" thought and felt.

In his description of Larkin's death, this method sinks to extraordinary depths of bathos. Keneally (or the team of diligent professional researchers whose work he acknowledges) has unearthed a contemporary local newspaper account of Larkin's last days. It tells us that the poor man had drunk two gallons of rum in two days and that "under restraint" in a local hospital "he continued to rave in a frightful manner." Shortly before his death, Larkin escaped from the hospital naked except for his shirt, rushed to a bar and ordered a glass of brandy. Risibly, Keneally pretends not merely to know what went on in the disordered mind of a raving alcoholic, but also to give it a political and religious meaning:

> So, in his last days, he re-attained the fury he had unleashed at the Seymours' door a quarter of a century before. The cosmic argument he had with himself as he lay dying would have included the old quarrel at Somerset House, the violent arrest, Esther Larkin and his Irish sons, and their too well-imagined hunger. Spike Island was part of his cyclical dispute with God, as was *Parmelia*, the journey to Monaro, the withering bush loneliness, quarrels with Aborigines and with absconders, Mary Shields arriving full of defensive charm at Coolringdon, and the brisk clarity of the Australian Alps over which Brodribb drove livestock in the Monaro drought seasons.

With this final act of appropriation, Hugh Larkin is mercifully put out of his misery. But the same cannot be said for the reader, who still has four hundred pages to go.

KENEALLY NEXT TURNS his attention to a much higher class of exile—the leadership of the attempted revolt of 1848 and, to a lesser extent, of another abortive rising in 1867. Since Meagher and Mitchel subsequently escaped to America and had colorful careers there (the former as a Union general and governor of Montana, the latter as a Confederate propagandist), this allows Keneally to switch continents and to arrive, seasick and unsteady, at the major destination for Irish emigration.

It allows him, too, to ramble away at an almost infinite array of angles from what is supposed to be his subject, the history of the Irish diaspora. Unable to write a successful narrative about Hugh Larkin, and unwilling to write a biography of any one of the nationalist leaders, he gives us bits and pieces from different stories. In his acknowledgements, indeed, he slips in the appalling revelation that this already bloated book was originally two thousand pages long, and that it took four editors on two continents to cut it down to what he imagines is a "readable form." This knowledge can only be regarded by the reader with the most mixed of feelings. Gratitude at being spared 1,400 pages of this stuff is somewhat undermined by the incoherence of what remains.

It is not that Keneally does not have good stories to tell. Some of the episodes that he relates—such as the voyage of the ship *Catalpa*, sent by Irish-American republicans to rescue Irish political prisoners in Australia, or the quixotic invasion of Canada by Irish-American nationalists—are absorbing and well-told. It is simply that Keneally has no framework, literary or intellectual, into which he can fit them.

Moreover, his grasp of the details of Irish history is far from firm. He tells us that the Irish Volunteers of 1782 "successfully demanded an Irish parliament." In fact, the Irish parliament had long been in existence by 1782; the Volunteers demanded, and for a time were granted, greater autonomy for this parliament.

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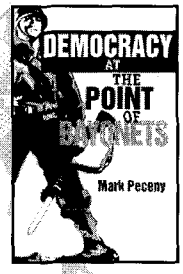

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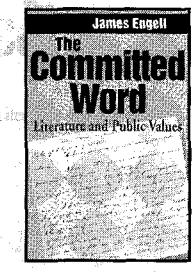

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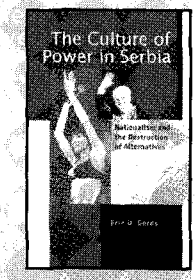

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Keneally's claim that the third Home Rule Bill, seeking to grant autonomy to Ireland within the United Kingdom, went "down before the combined vote of Conservatives and Ulster Loyalists" at Westminster is similarly wide of the mark: the bill was passed in 1914. And the present parliament in Dublin has no such intriguing name as "the Irish Dial." It is, alas, simply called the Dail—Gaelic for "parliament."

More serious than these errors of fact, however, is Keneally's uncertainty about what to do with significant aspects of his material. Consider an incident that he has uncovered from the official archives relating to William Smith O'Brien, a nationalist hero who was transported from Ireland for high treason in 1848, when he was 45, and whose statue still stands in O'Connell Street in the center of Dublin. O'Brien, a minor aristocrat and a substantial landlord, enjoyed a rather privileged imprisonment in Tasmania. He was allowed to move about quite freely and to mix with the family of the superintendent, an Irishman called Lapham. A policeman with a telescope spied O'Brien with Lapham's twelve-year-old daughter, Susan: "I saw Smith O'Brien reclining on a garden seat and Miss Susan was close to him. I positively declare I saw O'Brien's flies open in front and that I saw Miss Susan's hand in his trousers. Smith O'Brien had on his cloak and tried to conceal himself by drawing it around him . . . I have repeatedly seen them together after dark."

If this report can be believed (and it was supported by two other witnesses), Smith O'Brien was a child-molester. The reader might expect any half-serious biographer to tease out the implications of such a startling revelation. Yet Keneally, though he seems inclined to believe the reports of Smith O'Brien's behavior, merely recounts the information in two pages and then carries on as if it was of no real consequence. It is not, apparently, a worthy part of "the tale of the Irish."

Nor is Keneally really interested in the most fascinating and awkward question posed by the careers of the exiled nationalist leaders: how did Irish radicals turn into American reactionaries? Thomas Francis Meagher, so brave and eloquent in defending the Irish from oppression, saw no irony, as governor of Montana, in declaring war on the Blackfoot Indians. His rhetoric about the "rascalities in crimes, robberies and murders with which the liberality of the United States was repaid" by the Indians could have come directly from a British imperialist denunciation of his own political activities in Ireland.

John Mitchel, meanwhile, placed the same brilliant journalistic talents that he had devoted to the Irish cause at the disposal of the Southern slavers. He himself described his newspaper, the *Southern Citizen*, published in Knoxville, Tennessee as "an organ of the extreme Southern sentiment," one of whose aims was "to advocate earnestly the re-opening of the African slave trade in the interest both of blacks and whites." Even in his private correspondence, Mitchel insisted that "I consider negro slavery the best state of existence for the negro, and the best for his master."

To his credit, Keneally mentions these ironies. But he treats them as if they were merely incidental to the story of the Irish in the old and new worlds. That they might go the heart of nineteenth-century Irish nationalism, and of the transformation of the Irish in the new world from victims of racist oppression to beneficiaries of the supremacy of "the white race," seems beyond his ken. What the Irish really need is a story that does justice to their suffering and to their infliction of suffering on others; to their role as colonized people in the old world and as colonizers in the new world; and to the way in which they have been both the victims and the perpetrators of prejudice. Such a story, riddled with contradictions and ambiguities, would be historically more accurate, and more alive to the distinction between fact and fiction. And it would have a great deal to say to contemporary Ireland as it struggles to throw off the self-pity that fuels violence, and attempts to come to terms with its new responsibilities as a member of the privileged company of wealthy nations. ■

Ask, Tell

By Richard A. Posner

Gaylaw: Challenging the Apartheid of the Closet by William N. Eskridge Jr.

(Harvard University Press, 462 pp., $45)

William N. Eskridge, Jr. has written an impressive treatise on the regulation of homosexuality by American law. It is formidably learned, both in law and in the external disciplines (such as history, psychology, and sociology) that study homosexuality; and it is powerfully written and brilliantly argued.

Eskridge calls his subject "gaylaw." He means by this to encompass, besides the legal regulation of homosexual orientation and practices, the law's treatment of transsexuals and transvestites, thus extending the word "gay" to cover additional "gender nonconformists" (most of whom are not homosexual). But he has little to say about these rather small groups; the real significance of Eskridge's term is to suggest that reflection on the legal regulation of homosexuality has implications for other types of regulation, notably the regulation of heterosexual practices and institutions, including marriage. "Gay experiences have been systematically different from straight experiences," he observes, "and these differences can contribute to debates about the regulation of sex."

Still, Eskridge's analysis centers on the law's treatment of homosexuals, the broader implications being confined to portions of the third and last part of the book. The first part is a history of the law's treatment of homosexuals between 1880 and 1981, by which time, Eskridge argues, the issue of gay rights was being taken seriously for the first time. The second part is a sustained criticism of the principal areas in which the law has failed to recognize gay rights to the full extent that Eskridge believes justified. The third part, which is presented under the unfortunate rubric of "queer theory," deals boldly with such taboo issues as consensual sadomasochism, sex with and between children and the insane, homosexual marriage and adoption, and polygamy. The third part of Eskridge's book is a social or religious conservative's nightmare.

Eskridge is himself homosexual and he writes as a partisan, but in measured tones, without indignation, and with due regard for the arguments of his oppo-

Richard A. Posner is Chief Judge of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Seventh Circuit and the author of *Sex and Reason* (Harvard University Press).

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nents. He is willing to face uncomfortable facts, as when he remarks about AIDS that "if gay sex sidesteps the creation of life, it now waltzes in the shadow of death." His insider status is a strength, because sexual experience, like religious experience, is exceedingly private, and therefore difficult to write intelligently about from the outside. It is no accident that the leading scholar of the religion clauses of the Constitution, Michael McConnell, is one of the relatively few constitutional law professors who is a seriously believing Christian.

THE FIRST PART of Eskridge's book is the most riveting. A tour de force of narration, it holds the reader's attention for 137 dense pages of legal history. One learns, among other curious things, that sexual-psychopath law was applied to "the passing of bad checks by a suspected homosexual," and that California's Atascadero State Hospital was known as "Dachau for Queers," and that in the 1960s the *New York Times* referred to homosexuals in Times Square as "promenading perverts."

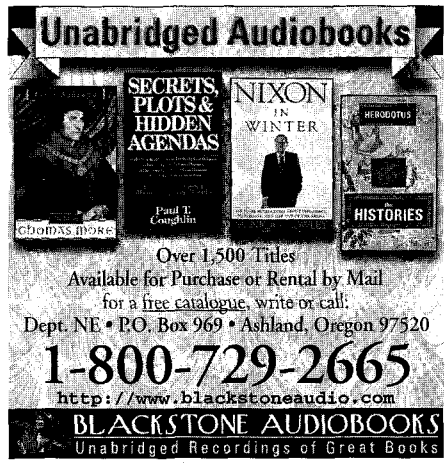
Many readers will be surprised to learn that official oppression of homosexuals increased throughout much of the century covered by Eskridge's historical narrative. This was in part because increased urbanization made homosexuals more visible (they could achieve critical mass for the first time), and in part because a growing belief in the importance to society of normality, a burgeoning population, mental and physical health, and companionate marriage tended to make homosexuals increasingly suspect. The McCarthy period featured a witchhunt for homosexuals: more State Department employees were fired during the 1950s as suspected homosexuals than as suspected Communists. War fever breeds paranoia, and a culture that celebrates companionate marriage as ardently as ours did in the 1950s is likely to consider homosexuality deeply, and menacingly, transgressive.

Another revelation is that the constitutional adventurism of the Supreme Court under Earl Warren's chiefship, an era in which the Court seemed to go out of its way to deny the existence of homosexual rights, produced substantial legal gains for homosexuals. The reason—this Eskridge does not stress—is that the types of legal regulation that the liberal decisions of the Warren Court made more difficult were precisely the methods by which law enforcers silenced, harassed, and intimidated homosexuals. Those methods included the enforcement of vagrancy laws, the prohibition of pornography, movie censorship, the discharge of tenured public employees, the enforcement of vague criminal statutes, the suppression of organizations that advocated "immoral" practices, and police brutality against and surveillance of members of disfavored groups.

What those methods had in common was the awarding of law enforcers with broad discretion to focus their efforts on marginal and unpopular groups—by firing employees without having to show a work-related reason, or rounding up loitering "perverts" or stationing police "toilet spies" in public restrooms to catch homosexuals in acts of public indecency. But such practices were restricted or constrained by the Warren Court; and so homosexuals were the unintended beneficiaries of legal innovations made by judges who for the most part had rather little sympathy for them.

THIS IS A POINT over which I would have expected Eskridge to pause. For it raises the question of whether homosexual *rights* is what gay-law should be pushing for, especially since, as he acknowledges, the pressure for those rights has engendered a counter-pressure for a heterosexual right of protection from homosexuals—specifically, for protection from homosexual "recruitment" and the homosexual "gaze." Just as *Roe v. Wade* gave birth to the *right* to life" movement, one claim of rights inciting an offsetting claim of rights. As the legal scholar Martha Ertman has argued, the judiciary is much more willing to enforce general rights on behalf of a disfavored minority than it is to create rights specially for them, and legislatures are distinctly unwilling to legislate in favor of homosexuals. The principle that legal disputes are to be decided without regard for whether the judge finds one litigant or the other repulsive or sympathetic is fundamental to the judicial "game," and it means that whatever rights of contract or due process or property or privacy the law recognizes for the community in general will be available in a practical sense, and not merely in a theoretical sense, to unpopular members of the community.

Thus judges who would be appalled at the thought of homosexual marriage are nevertheless quite likely to enforce "palimony" contracts between homosexuals, contracts that might provide a reasonable simulacrum of marriage. Of course it can be argued that to recognize homosexual marriage is not to confer a right on homosexuals, but merely to make the legal status of marriage available regardless of the gender relation of the parties. But the argument overlooks the fact that gender difference is considered by most people fundamental to the marriage status, whereas sexual orientation is not thought



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fundamental to rights of contract or property or procedure.

The main thrust of the second part of Eskridge's volume is to argue against the remaining categorial discriminations against homosexuals, in particular the criminalizing of homosexual sodomy (usually defined to include oral sex as well as anal sex) and the exclusion from the Armed Forces of persons who acknowledge being homosexual (the "don't tell" part of the Clinton administration's "don't ask, don't tell" rule). As a matter of pure policy, divorced from considerations of judicial precedent or public opinion, the first of these discriminatory laws is absurd and the second is unsound. Oral sex among heterosexuals, as we learned during the Clinton impeachment ordeal, is extraordinarily common, and anal sex is hardly unknown among heterosexuals, and this despite the alternative of vaginal intercourse, which is attractive to most heterosexuals but unappealing to homosexuals (unless the use of dildoes, popular with some lesbians, can be so classified). To forbid these practices to homosexuals, and thereby greatly curtail their sexual pleasure, is to inflict a gratuitous cruelty. Anyway, the prohibitions are vestigial; they are still on the statute books in a (diminishing) number of states, but they are almost never enforced. They are an embarrassing survival of an almost forgotten era of sexual prudery. And they are not entirely harmless, despite their deserved desuetude; they are sometimes invoked to deny homosexuals the right to adopt children. I shall argue shortly that such denial is wrong.

As for the issue of gays and lesbians in the Armed Forces, the United States is one of the diminishing minority of nations that worries about having uncloseted homosexuals among its soldiers. The experience of the nations that have dropped (or never instituted) such an exclusion suggests that the worry probably is unfounded. There is no basis for thinking that homosexuals are combat-incapable sissies; and experience with the sexual integration of our Armed Forces teaches that the problems of intrigue, harassment, and favoritism that arise when a workplace contains persons who have a sexual interest in one another are controllable. It is true that there is less privacy in an army than in the ordinary workplace, leading to concerns that heterosexual males will be demoralized by being subjected to the "homosexual gaze" while taking a shower; but the man who is seriously discomposed by a lascivious glance is the real sissy.

For a lawyer, the interesting question is not whether these policies are dumb, but whether the Supreme Court should hold them unconstitutional. I have my doubts, particularly about the military exclusion. Neither Eskridge, nor I, nor, as far as I know, anyone who writes about these issues, has any military experience, and this should make us all hesitate before prescribing personnel policies for the military. It is true that civilian officials forced the racial integration of the Armed Forces over the opposition of the generals in 1948 and that integration did not undermine military performance, but the officials who did this were, most of them, men with considerable military experience, from Truman on down, and there are ever fewer of these among the nation's high officials, including Supreme Court justices and other judges.

We must be cautious also about basing policy on the practices of other nations. If the American people are more hostile to homosexuals than the people of nations which do not attempt to exclude homosexuals from military service, and if, today, with the military a relatively unpopular career, our Armed Forces are recruiting disproportionately from the segment of the population that is hostile to homosexuals, abandonment of the exclusion might create serious problems of morale. Or it might not; I really have no idea. One possibility is piecemeal reform. The first step might be to change "don't tell" to "don't flaunt," so that private or otherwise discreet revelation of homosexual orientation would not be grounds for discharge.

IT CERTAINLY DOES NOT help, so far as seeking to invalidate on constitutional grounds either of the discriminations that I have been discussing, that the Constitution does not speak clearly to sexual issues. The lack of a firm textual basis for invalidation would undermine the perceived legitimacy of the Supreme Court's action, should it strike down prohibitions of homosexual conduct or orientation that have strong public support. I find wholly unconvincing Eskridge's argument that "sodomy laws are classic censorship" because oral and anal sex are modes of self-expression. This argument would make rape presumptively protected by the First Amendment, and it illustrates why laypeople are often correct in finding legal arguments absurd. (This particular argument is little better than a pun on the word "expression.") Eskridge is right that if homosexuals did not engage in homosexual activity, they would be unlikely to participate effectively in public debates over whether such activity should be permitted. But the same thing is true of price fixers. Since price fixing is criminalized, businessmen who believe that it should be decriminalized lack an experiential base from which to argue their point of view. How very sad. The whole of criminal law

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would unravel if Eskridge's argument were accepted.

Eskridge is on stronger ground, but not yet on strong ground, in arguing from cases dealing with the rights of other disfavored groups. He points out that more than twenty years ago the Supreme Court invalidated a statute that forbade the employment of members of the Communist Party U.S.A. in defense plants, which shows that considerations of national security do not always trump claims of constitutional right. But the weakness of arguing from cases—unless one is arguing in court, where cases have authority independent of their intrinsic merits—is that invariably the arguer takes for granted that the case from which he is arguing was correctly decided. Eskridge is quick to criticize cases with which he disagrees, but he makes no effort to defend those with which he agrees.

Eskridge's use of case authority is a familiar tactic in academic legal argument, but it should be resisted. It is a "heads I win, tails you lose" kind of argument. If a judicial decision favors the arguer's position, the decision is treated as having intrinsic authority, quite apart from the soundness of its reasoning. If it comes out against the arguer's position, it is treated as weightless if its reasoning is vulnerable. Responsible scholarly argument should rely only on cases that the arguer thinks correctly decided. I am not sure that Eskridge could make a convincing argument for the soundness of that 1967 case. Since the Communist Party U.S.A. was controlled by the Soviet Union, with whom we were in a state of cold but real war, it is possible to believe that the Supreme Court was trifling with our national security in forbidding the banning of the members of the party from our munitions factories.

THE FINAL PART of Eskridge's book is the most audacious. By taking on such issues as whether consensual sadomasochism should be permitted and discussing them under the rubric of "queer theory," Eskridge risks losing most of his straight audience outside the leftish precincts of the academy. "Queer theory" is a very "in your face" dispensation; it flaunts homosexuality rather than seeking to normalize it.

Granted, its bark is worse than its bite, since all it really wants to argue is that the conventional categories in which we discuss sexual phenomena—categories that include consent, coercion, and gender—are to some extent socially constructed rather than naturally given, and thus should be open to criticism and revision. Queer theory is thus continuous with radical feminism, and both have at least a core of common sense. Both teach that, for example, if a lesbian marries a man because of social pressure to conform to the norm of heterosexuality, then the sexual intercourse that ensues between the married couple is not unproblematically "consensual" on the part of the wife.

And conversely, if two people want to have a relationship in which one inflicts physical pain on the other—Eskridge illustrates with the practices of a homosexual S/M ring that included "nailing a man's penis to a bench" and "sandpapering a man's testicles"—then the infliction of that pain need not be thought coercive, even though the external manifestations of the pain-inflicting act are identical to those of a violent rape. But cutting back the other way, the "consent" of the "victim" may not be authentic if he or she is a masochist by virtue of some psychic injury or social brainwashing. Eskridge remarks that "by teaching thugs that they could have their way with fairies without accountability, the law encouraged their sadism; by teaching fairies that they were subhuman, the law inculcated in some of them a victim mentality of masochism." But he worries that such arguments reflect a "sex negativity" that reinforces the traditional stereotyping of homosexuals as promiscuous.

Some "queer theorists" advocate homosexual marriage because, by divorcing marriage from procreation, it undermines heterosexual marriage; others oppose homosexual marriage because they think it is part of a design to force homosexuals into an imitation of heterosexuality. Radical feminists might support homosexual marriage because in a marriage between two women, one of them, at least, must be a breadwinner, thus challenging the stereotypical heterosexual marriage in which the husband is the breadwinner and the wife stays at home with the kids. But radical feminists equally might oppose homosexual marriage as designed to shore up the institution of marriage by insisting that all sexual activity be channeled into it.

IT IS UNCLEAR where all this leads; probably nowhere. It would be pretty fantastic to argue that the lesbian who marries a man to hide, and who therefore does not consent to sex with him in a fully meaningful sense of "consent," should be thought a victim of rape; and, if not, it is unclear what is gained by casting into doubt the concept of consent. Eskridge might have been well advised to leave queer theory in the closet, as it were. The points that he makes about the specific issues seem to me on the whole pretty sensible, even the shocking ones, and they owe nothing to that body of thinking.

Eskridge argues that there is really nothing to differentiate consensual sadomasochism from a boxing match, in which consent is a defense to what would otherwise be assault and battery; and that people with mental disabilities are usually not completely irrational and generally have the same sexual desires and need for intimacy as the fully sane; and that most American teenagers are sexually sophisticated; and that there is no evidence that children adopted by homosexuals are more likely than any other children to grow up to be homosexuals; and that it would be a good idea for one or two states to legalize homosexual marriage so that we can see whether the sky would fall, as social conservatives predict. These arguments are, as I say, pretty sensible.

But they are not unassailable. The analogy between boxing and S/M, for example, is just that—an analogy. Boxing is a contest of skills, and partly for that reason it is an entertainment for other people, whereas pain seems to be the whole meaning of sadomasochism. But of course Eskridge is not arguing for sadomasochism (or for boxing), but rather for a Millian liberalism in the domain of sex. He holds that neither the state, nor even public opinion, has any business interfering with conduct that does not harm non-consenting third persons. I agree with this.

Applied to homosexual behavior, such a view focuses attention where it belongs, on the question of whether more tolerant laws and attitudes would increase the number of people who have a homosexual orientation. Although Eskridge may believe (he doesn't quite say so) that if every vestige of discrimination were eliminated, homosexuals would be as happy as heterosexuals, I am doubtful. I think that being homosexual, like being short or obese, is likely to continue to be disadvantageous for one's chances in life for as far into the future as we can see. The reason is that homosexuality complicates family formation.

A homosexual couple cannot have a genetic relationship to their child, though one of them can. Technology will someday overcome this, and then the issue will be whether the complementarity of the male sex drive and the female sex drive is a source of enhanced stability and contentment in a heterosexual relationship. Until then, however, I think that parents are reasonable not to want their children to be homosexual; and reasonable or not, most of them have, as an empirical matter, a strong preference for heterosexual children, and their preference in a matter so important to people deserves respect. It would be un-Millian to withhold it from them.

Still, I agree with the conclusion of Eskridge's too-brief discussion of the evi-

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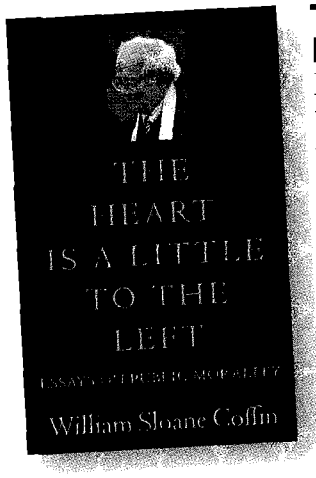

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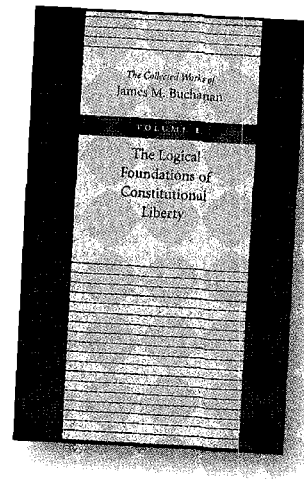

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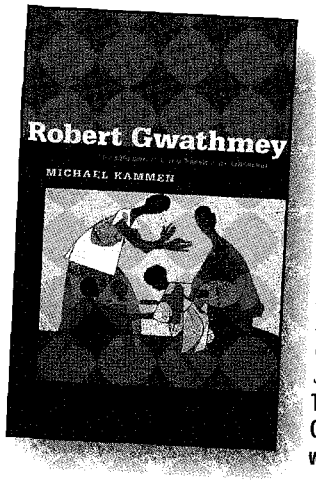

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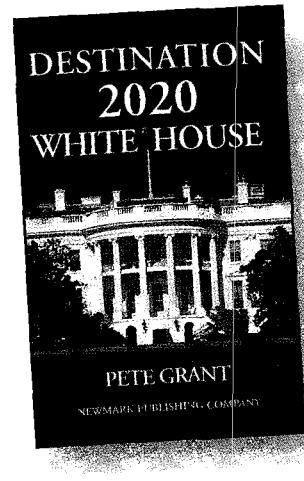

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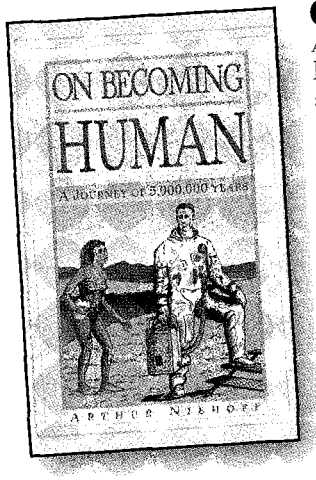

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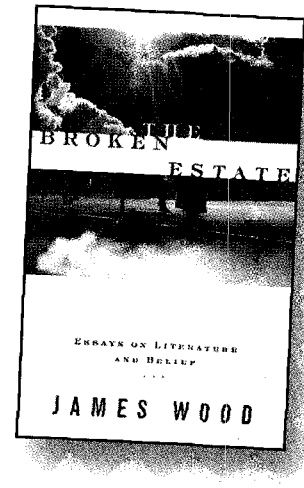

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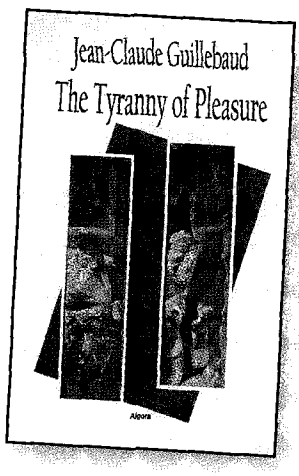

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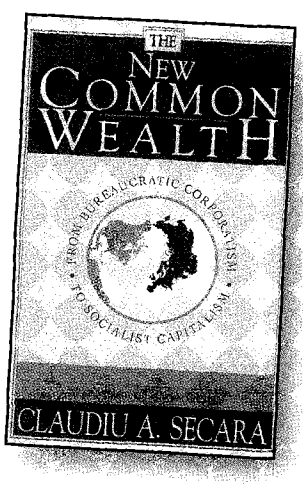

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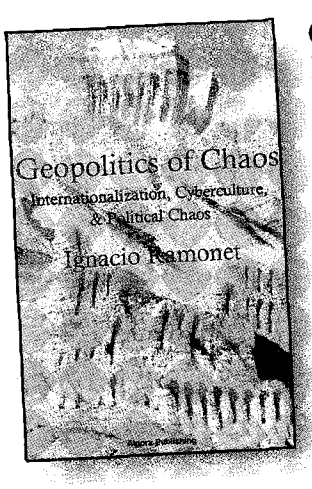

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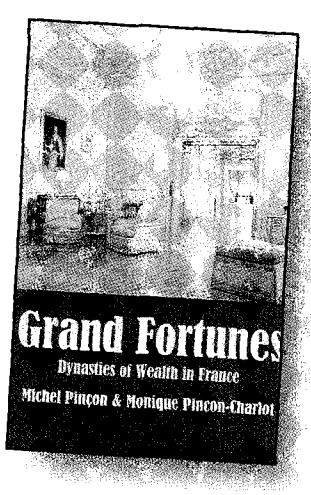

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dence concerning the causes of homosexual orientation that recruitment, seduction, propaganda, and the social acceptance of homosexuals are not causes of such an orientation. I believe that it is innate. There are, I realize, some political lesbians and, in our colleges, some "LUGs" (lesbians until graduation), and male teenagers, too, sometimes go through a bisexual stage. But one's long-term sexual orientation, so far as we now know, is determined rather than acquired. It is hard to believe otherwise when one considers the extraordinary fact that throughout most of recorded history it has been a great disadvantage to be a homosexual, and yet there have been a great number of homosexuals in every known society. ■

Picture Imperfect

By RICHARD WHITE

Edward Curtis and the North American Indian Incorporated by Mick Gidley

(Cambridge University Press, 288 pp., $54.95)

YOU MAY NOT recognize Edward Curtis by name, but you know his photographs. If you came of age in the 1960s, you have probably made them as synonymous with that decade as tie-dye. I have buried somewhere among my books a big folio set of Curtis reproductions that, as I recall, a friend, a Yaqui Indian, bought me when the waning rage for Curtis stranded this particular edition on the remainder tables. It has the classic images. There is "The Vanishing Race," its line of Navajos on horseback riding away from the camera with the last rider looking back over his shoulder. And there is "The Old Cheyenne," a man dressed in a headdress, a scalplock decorating his clothing, his expression somewhat absent, as if his spirit lingers in a long past place. I never asked the friend why he bought me Curtis. At the time, I didn't have to ask.

These photographs—nostalgic, romantic, extremely artful—capture the basic Curtis technique. They pretend that they have caught not the moment when the camera shutter clicked, but instead an antique past that the Old Cheyenne seems to make incarnate. The photographs of Curtis are illustrative of how the modern American obsession with Indian peoples finds its true north in a single long generation arising in the middle of the nineteenth century and dwindling out in the early twentieth. Indian peoples have been on this continent for tens of thousands of years, but when they appear in modern American films, fiction, art, and history, they cluster in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries like refugees from a broader and now lost past.

In this construction, Indianness has no place in the modern world. The roughly half a century between the Indian wars on the Great Plains and the last of the photographs of Edward Curtis are in time what Indian reservations are in space: places in which Indians concentrate in remnants of a once larger domain now supposedly cleansed of them. On reservations, of course, actual Indian life goes on, constrained and limited by circumstances as it may be; but Indian life of the late nineteenth and early twentieth-century lives on only in its representations.

Mick Gidley's book on Edward Curtis necessarily begins and ends with representations. He is less interested in the Indians whom Curtis claims to have represented than in the process and the business of representing them. In the end, he makes actual Indian lives seem untouchable, mysterious, and oddly inconsequential. What is bothersome is not this initial reliance on representations of Indians by whites, but the scholar's refusal to go beyond them except in the most cursory and predictable ways. Indeed, sailing in the long wake of Edward Said's *Orientalism*, Gidley raises the possibility that Curtis's work provides no knowledge at all of the Indians whom Curtis represented; that there is only knowledge of the representations themselves and how they reflect the culture of those who made them. Actual people, with actual ways of life who once stood before the camera, disappear. All we are left with are photographs, and constructions, that themselves "constitute 'reality' for the cultures that produced and consumed them." In this way, new literary theory comes to have the effect of old ethnic prejudice: it robs Indians of their reality.

What Gidley calls "the North American Indian Incorporated" depends on reproductions, but Curtis as a photographer is not Gidley's central concern. Curtis instead becomes a rather pathetic figure, a creature of his culture and his patrons. "The North American Indian, Incorporated": the very phrase betrays Gidley's real interest, which is the business of being Curtis, and, perhaps a little too cutely, the larger cultural efforts in which Curtis played a minor role to incorporate Indian peoples into American society. Curtis the businessman and Curtis the defender of American Indian policy often overshadow Curtis the photographer. Paradoxically, it is this very interesting idea whose execution leaves the book hollow at the core. Gidley knows far more about Curtis than about early twentieth-century American society, and Gidley's mastery of Curtis's career is too often dissolved by Gidley's reductionist interpretations of American culture. The more Gidley attempts to put Curtis in context, the more insubstantial he becomes.

BORN IN MINNESOTA in the wake of the Civil War, Curtis came to Washington Territory in the late nineteenth century, and following an accident on the family farm he bought a photographic studio in Seattle. In 1899, he served as official photographer to the Harriman Alaska Expedition and, according to Gidley, the scientists and the ethnologists on the expedition convinced him that his fascination with Indians could serve science since "the Indians' future existence was doubtful and, at best, limited."

A redemptive ethnography was the soul of Curtis's enterprise. He shared the conviction—it was in fact much older than Gidley lets on—that the Indians were vanishing. They were declining in number and they were losing land; their cultures seemed unable to withstand the modern world. They were defined as primitives in a world supposedly epitomized by progress and modernity. Although the pictorialist avant-garde of the time heavily influenced his photographic technique, Curtis's stated purpose was not aesthetic but ethnographic—saving, in words and in pictures, what could not longer exist in the world.

But art and ethnography were not mutually exclusive. Curtis's pictures of Indians began more as a passion than a business. His studio soon existed largely to generate income to sustain his field trips in search of Indian subjects. When

RICHARD WHITE is a professor of history at the University of Washington.

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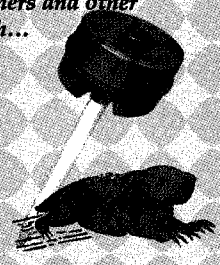

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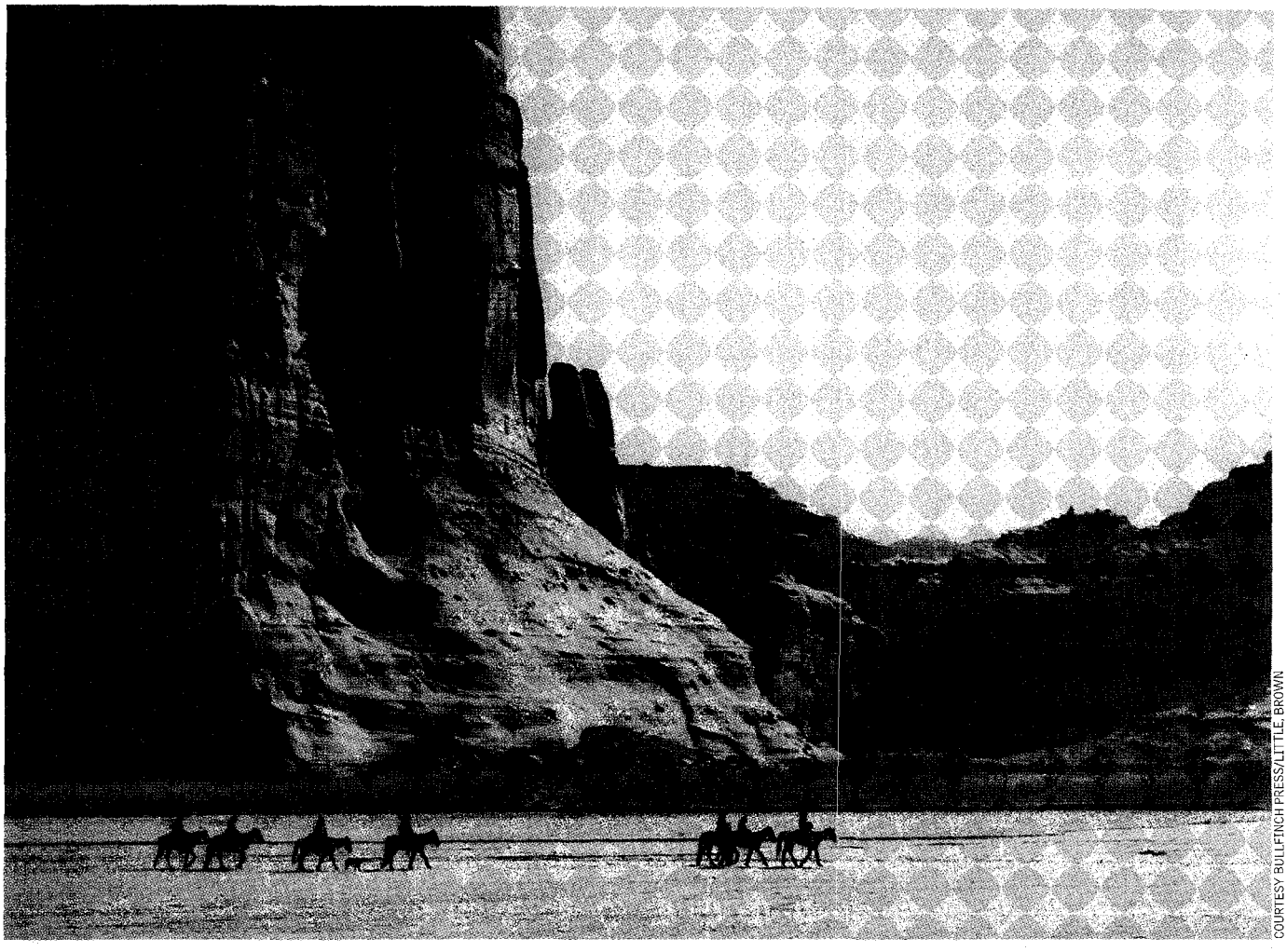

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Edward Curtis, "Cañon de Chelly, Arizona–Navajo," 1904

his resources proved inadequate, he embarked on what would be a nearly lifelong search for the patronage necessary to support his family. In 1906 he found his patron in J.P. Morgan, who would subsidize *The North American Indian* as twenty volumes of illustrated text and twenty portfolios of large-sized photogravures.

The North American Indian sought to capture and to preserve, in Curtis's words, "the old-time Indian, his dress, his ceremonies, his life and manners." Curtis reduced the past to a single timeless moment: the unchanging world of the primitive that existed before Europeans brought time and history. Curtis's task was to gather up the remnants of that world—the people and the artifacts—and preserve them, in pictures, against the corrosions of modernity. His photographs were superbly orchestrated, from their composition to their printing. (In a photograph of Van Gosh, a Jicarilla Apache, Curtis throws his own body into shadow in order to illuminate and to accentuate the profile of his head.) Curtis perfected the ethnographic cheesecake: Indian women discarding modern dress and assuming a half-dressed pose with the objects that Curtis often brought to the "authentic" scene. But it was not only the Indian woman who stood exposed before his camera. Hallowed objects, such as the Mandan sacred turtles, were also unveiled in Curtis's photographs.

And Curtis's efforts went far beyond publishing. He produced an elaborate musicale—an evening of pictures, words, and music—that Gidley does a fine job of resurrecting, as well as his pioneering film *In the Land of the Headhunters* that used Kwakiutl (Kwakwaka'wakw) ethnography as material for a Romeo and Juliet story. Curtis put elaborate effort into his Indian work. Morgan's subsidy allowed him to leave the management of his studio to an associate. He hired William Myers, an ex-newspaperman from Seattle, as chief ethnologist, and he recruited Native American intermediaries, informants, and interpreters who became critical to his work.

Curtis carefully constructed, arranged, and posed the pictures that he offered the American people as portraits of the "real Indian." Gidley exposes Curtis's artifice, as others have done before him, but he does not mean to suggest that Curtis was a fraud. He would lose his significance if he was merely a charlatan; and Gidley is arguing for Curtis's representativeness. Curtis's whole enterprise, Gidley argues, was "entirely typical of his time."

Curtis was typical of his time all right, but the real question is what this typicality involves. Gidley largely means that Curtis's activities expressed the ideological interests of the "dominant culture." This is really culture with a capital "c." It acts directly on Curtis; it possesses him; he obeys it. Curtis might seem to be producing culture, but he is being produced by it. Gidley asserts that Curtis was not so much an "author of words and images" as someone subject to "a controlling logic of culture." Here is Culture thinking itself.

But the controlling logic of culture is itself controlled. Arguing somewhat circularly, Gidley further reduces culture to the "cultural assumptions of the dominant forces in American society." And those dominant forces in the early twentieth century are reduced in turn to a congeries of capitalists—personified by Curtis's sponsor Morgan—and politicians—

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personified by Theodore Roosevelt. Gidley does not claim that these men directly influenced Curtis's photography; no such direct and demonstrable influence is required, since in Gidley's view their very existence meant that Curtis would please them in order to gain their patronage.

To support such a reading, Gidley cites William Truetner's *The West as America*, which was severely attacked when it appeared in 1899. I dearly wish that having silly and vicious enemies was a guarantee of truth; but Truetner's book, for all its virtues, reduces all of western expansion to the machinations of "a controlling entrepreneurial group" who then patronized artists such as Curtis to justify and to sanctify the enterprise. Predatory capitalists, Gidley argues at one point, subscribed to the North American Indian because they found him so useful. But why did they find him useful? This is not entirely clear in Gidley's account. He admits that Curtis's own ideological positions were rather confused and contradictory, but he argues that this absence of an ideology actually demonstrates (in a way that is too deep for me to grasp) "the presence of such an ideology."

An ideology whose absence denotes its presence is a tough thing to specify, and Gidley is often a little vague about what it contains. No wonder Curtis got confused! The ideology seems to be progressive in the sense of celebrating progress, and conservative in the sense of defending the status quo. Also it has an inordinate interest in preserving a record of the culture of American Indians while speeding their demise. J.P. Morgan subsidized art about Indians, but he also subsidized art about dinosaurs in the Museum of Natural History, and numerous other things that Gidley does not mention. Both, I guess, are celebrations of evolutionary progress, and thus by Gidley's logic are part of a larger strategy of representational control, but neither seems really central to a defense of Morgan's interests.

THE PITY OF Gidley's reductionism is that it wastes so much interesting research by embedding it in a cartoon history, and that it actually replicates the sins that Gidley attributes to Curtis. American Indian policy can indeed be associated with Curtis's photography, but the connections are looser and more general than Gidley thinks. Late nineteenth-century Indian policy more often than not assumed the racial equality of Indians and their cultural inferiority. Culture was the problem, and it had to be changed. In the name of this racially egalitarian premise, the "friends of the Indian" stripped Indian peoples of their land, suppressed their religions, took away many of their children, and interfered in their homes, marriages, and politics. The result was a disaster. Indians did not disappear, but they grew poorer and more marginalized.

By the early twentieth century, when Edward Curtis was most active in Indian affairs, the failure of Indian policy was apparent and increasingly acknowledged; but the blame was placed on the Indians. The problem was not cultural after all. The problem was racial. Indians, many policymakers came to believe, were just inferior stock. The vast majority of them, like so many of the new immigrants from Eastern and Southern Europe and African Americans and so many others, just did not qualify for participation in America, and so it was best to leave them to sink to their own level. This view allowed, and still allows, a romanticized appreciation of Indian traditions, particularly as an antidote to the problems of industrial society, while largely dismissing Indians as corrupted, if tragic, people. It created a market that appreciated Indian culture but did not have much interest in actual Indians. It created a market for Curtis.

THUS THE POLITICS and the representation of Indian culture at the turn of the twentieth century were far more complicated than Gidley lets on. And so, too, were Indian societies. Gidley plays lip service to actual American Indian cultures as adaptive, hybridized, and as "modern" as the larger American culture of which they were a part, but these are asides. They read like concessions to objections by readers of the manuscript. In the bulk of the text, Gidley, as much as Curtis, conflates the Indian with the traditional. There are potentially interesting Indians in Gidley's book, but they are not taken seriously. Their role is the role of all noble savages: to show the inadequacies of whites. Curtis thought about, lived among, and negotiated with Indians, but by Gidley's reasoning his only really meaningful engagements could be with whites. This plays havoc with the book and history. In a society already segregated, Gidley retrospectively increases the segregation.

Gidley recognizes that modernity is what most Americans deny Indians, but he is reluctant to let go of the traditional. Modernity in this book is just too corrosive, and Indians are just too tender. In Gidley's account, paying Indians for posing and collecting is conflated with grave-robbing. He denounces Curtis for confining Indians in his images to their own world and denying them a place as producers and consumers in the national economy, but then he denounces a variety of exchanges as appropriation and he sees tourist performances as inherently corrupting.

In *Tribal Secrets*, which appeared in 1944, and which examined a number of Indian intellectuals and writers, Robert Warrior argued convincingly that the escape from this particular conflation of Indians with tradition and whites with modernity involves recognizing, and recovering, an American Indian intellectual tradition that is both distinctive and constantly engaged with the larger society. The recognition of an Indian intellectual tradition that involves far more than traditionalism might have allowed Gidley to place Curtis alongside someone such as Charles Eastman, a Santee Sioux intellectual of the period, whose work displayed attitudes that are quite similar to those of Curtis. Eastman's *The Soul of the Indian*, and his autobiography, *From Deep Woods to Civilization*, are far less ambitious enterprises than Curtis's *North American Indian*; but they contain the same suspicious "salvage ethnography," the same enterprise of recovering the jewels of the past from the debris of the present ("the religious life of the American Indian before he knew the white man"), the same belief that Indian virtues are to be found in the "traditional" Indian and not in people living in the mixed, hybridized culture of the modern world.

Still, this traditional culture does seem to foreshadow the best in the Christian American culture of the early twentieth century, where Eastman, like Curtis, saw the Indian future now that Indians had been "overthrown by a stronger race." Where Eastman differed from Curtis was in his use of the trope of the "Vanishing Indian" as an instrument of criticism of American progress and society. That Eastman is an Indian intellectual writing for whites and making Vanishing Indian arguments similar to Curtis's, but for somewhat different purposes, certainly complicates the kind of reductionism that Gidley deploys.

LIKE MANY PROFESSORS' books these days, Gidley's book turns out to be both useful (because he knows an enormous amount about his subject) and disappointing (because he twists his knowledge into the shape of his unexamined theory). For all his air of high-cultural criticism, Gidley finally resorts to a chiaroscuro as familiar and as simplifying as the one that Edward Curtis used so deftly. Still, Indians were at least Curtis's collaborators and assistants, and the subjects of his photography and ethnography. Gidley's theoretical assumptions consign Indians once again to the shadows, and weirdly prefer to illuminate J.P. Morgan instead. ■

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WASHINGTON DIARIST

Dollar Bill

THERE'S NOTHING UNusual about an ex-senator turning himself into a corporate asset. Robert Dole does it by telling everyone he takes Viagra. And, after retiring from the Senate, Bill Bradley did it for nearly two years as a senior adviser and "vice chairman of the international council" of J.P. Morgan and as a consultant to Morgan Guaranty Trust (total pay: $300,000). He also gave speeches that lent his luster to Chase and Barclays, among others. Had Bradley been content to live out his life serving such old friends, this would have been no big deal. But then he decided that he was at last willing to be president, that the country really needed him, that he was a morally superior person and morally superior, in particular, to Al Gore, who is a sinner by dint of being Bill Clinton's vice president. These ethical pretensions actually offended some former colleagues, who had experienced up close Bradley's hauteur, his aloofness, his apathy, his blithe demeanor, and his injured heart. When Bradley was in office, the decorum of the Senate prohibited colleagues from describing him as a lone wolf, a lip server, an egotist, a pedant, a bore—anything but a leader. Now, however, they do, at least in private.

OR SO I HAVE DISCOVERED DURING conversations with Democratic senators in recent months (I don't really know many Republican senators). Yes, leftist tribune Paul Wellstone and inveterate Clinton-hater Bob Kerrey have endorsed Bradley. The endorsement of Pat Moynihan, whom I have admired and liked enormously for 30 years, is another matter, if only because he treats being a senator with such (appropriate) gravity. He is also a little quirky, and one of his quirks is that he sometimes sees political disagreements as deep personal slights. In any case, that's how he experienced the administration's welfare reform, the one Clinton-era measure that probably returned more middle- and working-class voters to the Democratic line than any other. (And, not coincidentally, it got many thousands of able-bodied welfare mothers back to work.) Bradley voted, with Pat, against it, and Moynihan's backing will apparently be his reward. And, like Kerrey, Moynihan holds the president in contempt. Perhaps, if he hadn't let the first lady's army traipse all over his upstate farm for her senatorial announcement event, he wouldn't feel the need to get at Clinton via Gore. But he did, and, so, alas, he does.

ALL THE SAME, VIRTUALLY NO ONE talks of Bradley as a pacesetter for others. He served in the Senate for 18 years, yet he is identified with no particular theme and no particular issue. In this, his drabness contrasts with the passions of others: Russell Feingold has campaign finance reform; Dick Durbin, gun control; Tom Daschle, the strength of the Democratic party itself. Bradley's non-record also contrasts with Al Gore's demonstrable leadership in the Senate on the environment, information technology, and arms control. Oops, I forgot. For many years, Bradley has spoken up about the burden of Third World debt on poor countries. Of course, it is also a threat to the big money center banks, a fact certainly not lost on the man whose political career has drawn notable support from the ranks of Goldman Sachs and Salomon Brothers.

RELYING ON RESEARCH BY THE WASHington-based Center for Responsive Politics, the Associated Press released an especially revealing article on July 22. It broke down each candidate's contribution total (in number of contributors and in actual money received) by the percentages of small and large contributions. There was no surprise in the comparison between George W. Bush's tallies and Al Gore's. The $37 million Bush raised in the first six months of this year came from 74,000 people, of whom 30,000 (or 41 percent) gave less than $200, together amounting to $1.9 million, just over five percent of Bush's total. Gore's contributions totaled $17.5 million and came from nearly 99,000 people, more than 80 percent of whom gave in quantities of less than $200. The little guys' contributions came to $2 million, or 11.1 percent, of Gore's total. (The Gore camp told me the figure is $3.5 million, or 20 percent of the total.) And Bradley, the newly minted populist who has announced, "I am raising money from ordinary citizens, not from special interest PACs"? Well, banks are not exactly PACs, but bankers are very efficient bundlers. In the first six months of this year, employees of J.P. Morgan and their families contributed $55,100 to Bradley's campaign. Add to that number the $55,750 contributed by executives and families of the investment bank Morgan Stanley Dean Witter. Then there were the pharmaceutical executives and the insurance executives. Out of nearly $12 million contributed in the first six months of this year to Bradley, less than $300,000, or just 2.6 percent, came in donations smaller than $200. Bradley had a total of 19,335 contributors, of whom a few more than 5,000, or 26.6 percent, gave less than $200. I don't want to overinterpret these numbers; there's probably no one who doesn't have some checks from bankers. But it is striking (isn't it?) that there should be so many more small contributors, both absolutely and proportionally, to Bush than to Bradley. This disparity is even greater between Bradley's fund-raising and Gore's. For all his sanctimony, Bradley is the most dependent on big money, more dependent than Bush!

THE NEW YORK TIMES' RICHARD L. Berke reports that many important Republican operatives think Bradley would make a stronger candidate against Bush than Gore would. Thanks for the free advice, gentlemen. You may be able to gull Berke into believing that this is neutral analysis. But if I were a GOP state chairman or a Republican senator, I'd be saying exactly the same thing. They want the Democrats to select a loser. So they disparage Gore to strengthen Bradley. Not only would Bradley's minimal record provide the GOP with a weak contrast to Bush's own nearly blank slate, but also, since Gore has seized the middle, Bradley has been listing steadily leftward, where the voters are not. His nomination is a Democratic disaster scenario. No wonder prominent Republicans are pushing it. I know Bill Kristol, the editor of *The Weekly Standard*, quite well; we're friends. But he never says anything to help Democrats.

NOT HAVING SPENT POLITICAL CAPItal on urgent issues before, Bradley now cherry-picks for constituencies. He says he is a big supporter of moving the American Embassy in Israel from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem. *Mazel tov.* He also favors permitting gays to serve openly in the military. These are for him check-off policies, especially for the primaries in New York and California. Even if he held these positions before, he never exerted himself for them the way many of his Senate colleagues—Gore among them—truly did. Sometimes Bradley is just clueless. Pressed at a meeting convened by Al Sharpton to give his views on reparations, he responded, "Reparations for what?" Reparations for slavery are a nostrum mostly on the African American extreme. But someone who doesn't know what the word means, in history and in present-day black-white relations, hasn't been listening. One more consideration: Bradley is not boring; he is deadly boring. Compared to Bradley, in fact, cerebral Al Gore is Ricky Martin.

MARTIN PERETZ

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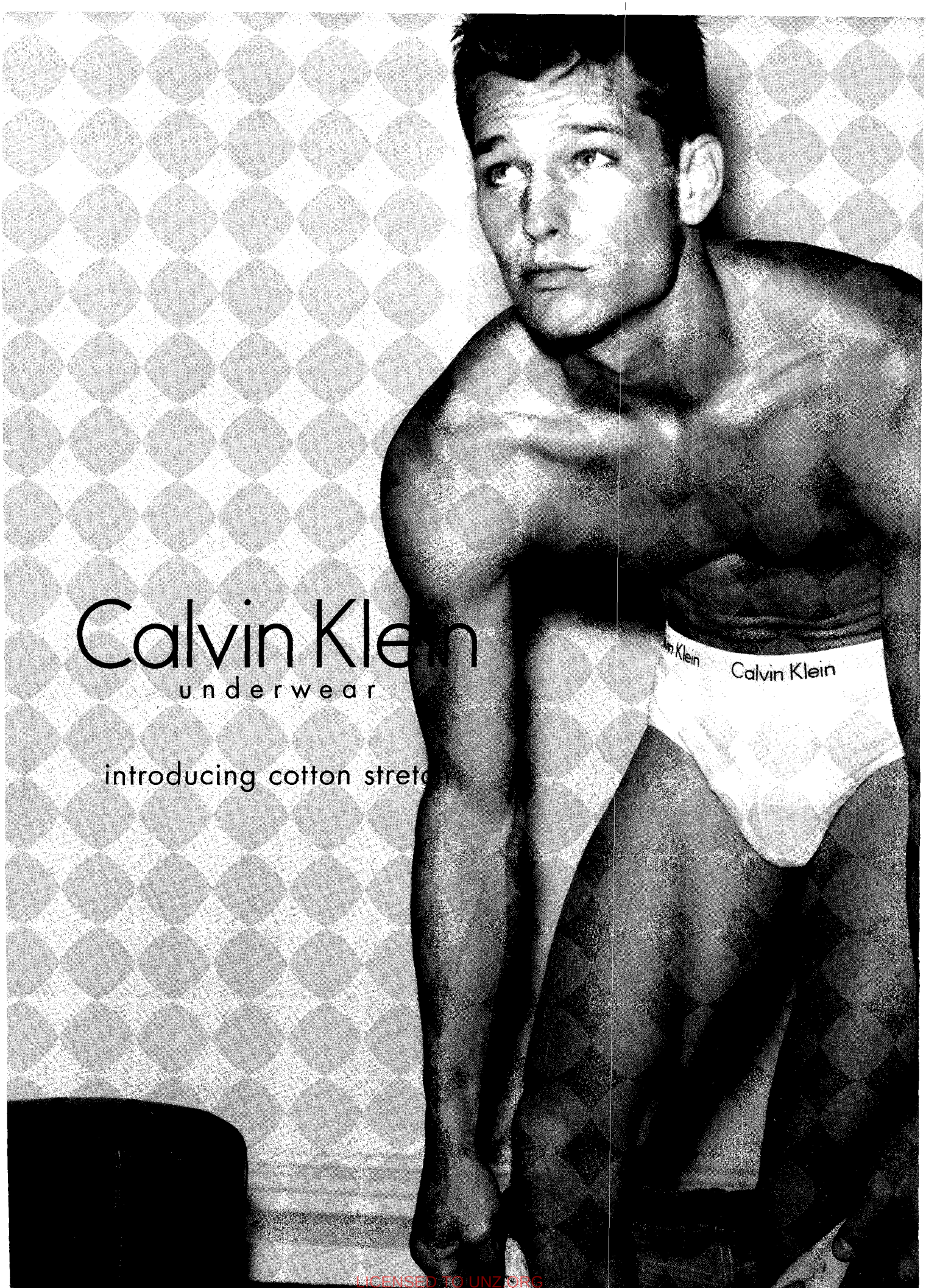

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